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THE
REPENTANCE OF NUSSOOH.

THE REPENTANCE OF NUSSOOH

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL HINDUSTANI

BY

M. KEMPSON

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TRANSLATOR'S NOTICE.

THE Hindustani tale, of which this little volume is a free version, came into my hands in the course of work in India. It was published shortly afterwards by the author,* and, though little known to Europeans, has passed through several editions in the native presses of Agra and Lucknow.

I translate it for three reasons. First, because I am sure that the kindness with which the condition and progress of our Indian fellow-subjects are regarded by Englishmen will be enhanced in the minds of those who care to peruse the version ; secondly, because the insight which the tale affords into the domestic habits of the people cannot but be useful to all who are engaged in, or look forward to, an Indian career ; and thirdly, because I wish to draw attention to the original as the best specimen yet published of the most widely used of the Indian vernaculars, as it is spoken in the home of the language, Dehli, which is the scene of the story.

* MAULVI Haji Hafiz NUZEER AHMED, *Khan Bahadur*, Superintendent Revenue Department, H.H. The Nizam's Dominions, Haidarabad, Deccan.

The Repentance of Nussooh, equally with its companion tale, *The Bride's Mirror*, was written for private circulation among the author's family connections, in the first instance ; and the picture of life and manners which it presents could have been drawn by a native only.

The author, who is a finished scholar and dialectician of the Oriental school, was long a "Deputy-Collector" under the English Government, and some years ago was chosen by the late Sir Salar Jung to fill an important office in the administration of Haidarabad, which he still holds.

I have his permission to translate the work.

M. K.

Ascot, 1884.

P R E F A C E.

By SIR WILLIAM MUIR, K.C.S.I.

THE vernacular languages of INDIA are singularly wanting in sound literature of a useful and amusing sort. Such works as there are abound, for the most part, in matter of an objectionable tendency. There is, for example, next to nothing in the way of instructive and entertaining stories, suitable for the young, or for readers of the fair sex. Hence arises one of the great obstacles to education, and specially the education of girls. Husbands and fathers naturally hesitate to encourage a taste for reading to be gratified only by the perusal of questionable books.

The Repentance of Nussooh was submitted to MR. KEMPSON about ten years ago, when Director of Public Instruction in the North-Western Provinces, in pursuance of a Notification offering prizes for meritorious treatises in the vernacular; and it gained the reward of £100.

In awarding the prize to the writer of *The Repentance of Nussooh*, the following orders were addressed to MR. KEMPSON, and published in the Gazette of the NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES for 1874 :—

The tendency of the book, and the language in which it is written, are deserving of the warmest commendation. Indeed, the vigour of

expression, the chaste and simple beauty of the style, and the singular aptness and richness of idiom, are probably unequalled in Urdu. The impartial mingling of words of Hindoo, and of Persian and Arabic origin, as they are found in the common speech of **DEHLI**, is a high merit. The copious use of proverbial phrases and poetical adages, especially of phrases occurring in the familiar discourse of domestic life, will add greatly to the usefulness of the book. A most valuable insight is also given into the details of Mahometan family life, which will make this work, like *The Bride's Mirror*, instructive to the European reader.

But the leading feature of the book is its religious bearing. At the outset the **AUTHOR** frankly acknowledges his inability to inculcate domestic virtues apart from religion; indeed, his conviction in this matter is couched in the strongest possible language. "My first purpose," he writes, "was to establish the necessity of social and family virtue and morality, without reference to religion.* But, as I proceeded, I found that I might as well seek to separate the body from the soul, to tear the nail from the flesh, to sever the quality from the essence, or to divide the ray of light from the sun." And, accordingly, the moral of the story is that an earnest and sincere following-up of religious conviction is the only sound basis of domestic happiness. No doubt, various opinions will be held upon the maxim here laid down; but there can be no question as to the earnest convictions of the Writer, nor as to the Catholic spirit in which, from a Mahometan point of view, he has carried out his object. . . . On a careful perusal of the whole, **HIS HONOUR** is satisfied that the **AUTHOR** has well fulfilled his resolution of avoiding everything that is bigoted, or that might prove offensive to persons of another creed; and, also, of laying such stress upon the great verities which underlie religious belief, that his lessons might, by implication, be well received even by others than professors of his own faith. And in this view, **HIS HONOUR** quite agrees with you that the work may prove acceptable not only to Mahometans, but also to the Hindoo and Christian reader. Such scenes as that of the little daughter's conversation with **FAHMEEDAH** on the duty owing to her **MAKER** are full of nature and tenderness, and can hardly be perused otherwise than with profit to the reader of whatever creed.

Such being the case, **SIR WILLIAM MUIR** has no hesitation in

* The Notification being by Government was necessarily confined to works of a secular character.

admitting this work as properly falling under the scope of the Notification; and in awarding to it the full prize of One thousand rupees, assured that the book is a valuable addition to our vernacular literature, and that it will be highly popular among the Mussulmans, and will be widely read by other classes also.

I believe that, in the present state of Indian literature, no better text-books than these two works of our Author—*The Bride's Mirror* and *The Repentance of Nussook*—could be found for the acquisition by the English scholar of an easy and elegant style of speaking and writing in the Urdu language. The idiom is that of the pure vernacular spoken in Dehli. The stories abound with characteristic incidents and useful illustrations of the habits and customs of Mahometan life. In this view, both of these works should prove particularly useful for ladies who have occasion to visit the zenânas of Upper India.

The translation has been done by Mr. KEMPSON faithfully and ably. The language and colloquial expressions are happily rendered, and the Oriental ideas and allusions are made readily intelligible to the European reader—a task at times of very considerable difficulty. Some of the chapters and dialogues have been, with advantage, much abbreviated, which in the original are unnecessarily prolix.

Not the least advantage of the work is the knowledge it gives of the better tendencies of ISLAM, in the encouragement of virtue and repression of vice. Indeed, the religious cast of the tale is singular, and, for a Moslem, I believe quite unique. It differs in this respect from all other Mahometan treatises that I have met with. Popular religious works amongst them are, as a rule, purely formal, and confined to the inculcation of a round of duties and ceremonies. That Religion should

be a *pervading influence*, guiding the household and leavening domestic life, is for a Moslem book a novel theme. In fact, it is only in a country under Christian influences, like those which happily are seen and felt in India, that the idea of such a book would present itself to the Moslem mind. And the fact cannot but be regarded as an encouraging token of the effect of our religious teaching in India. This is the more remarkable as NÚZEER AHMED, when he composed the work, was little, if at all, conversant with English literature, and its influence, therefore, must have been purely indirect; and, in some respects, the fact is all the more valuable because the influence is indirect. The tale is not the mere imitation of an English work, though it be the genuine product of English ideas.

For all these reasons I have great satisfaction in commending Mr. KEMPSON'S translation to all who are interested in INDIA, and also in advocating with him the use of the original Treatise as a Text-book for the acquisition of HINDUSTANI, and for the examinations of proficiency in the same.

W. M.

July 1884.

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THE REPENTANCE OF NUSSOOH.

CHAPTER I.

NUSSOOH'S DREAM.

NOT very long ago the cholera was so bad in Dehli that thirty or forty deaths a day were counted in a single street. The public thoroughfares, once crowded with men till midnight, were empty. The hammer of the artizan had ceased, and the street-criers were dumb. There was no visiting, no hospitality, no friendly intercourse, for all had lost heart and hope. A man might be walking about in the best of health, when of a sudden he felt ill. There was no chance of escape, no time even to make a will. In one short quarter of an hour all was over—vomiting, medicine, prayer, and the death-

rattle. The city lost half its population. Thousands of orphans bemoaned their parents' loss.

Nussooh, whose story I am about to tell, had foreseen at the first outbreak the necessity of precaution. He had his cooking-vessels re-tinned, and impressed the duty of cleanliness on his household. Frankincense was burned, and camphor and charcoal placed about the rooms. The usual native remedies—cocoanut, aniseed, tamarind, lime-juice, &c.—were provided in readiness for emergency. A stock of English medicines was laid in—cholera-pills from the Dispensary, tincture from Allahabad, chlorodyne from Agra,* and a specific, said to have been recently discovered by a Bengali, was procured from Benares. There was some comfort too in the fact that a physician lived close by. But the Angel of Death was at the door. Nussooh's father was the first seized, and the old man died before a single potion could be administered. The aunt came next; but she, poor soul, was too tired of life to care for physic. And then the family nurse was taken ill; and though she tried all the medicines, her course, too, was run. Despair fell upon the survivors, and Nussooh sat down to await his destiny.

Six miserable weeks passed by. Rich and poor alike suffered from the visitation, and at last the rumour went

* These medicines are constantly advertised in the local press, as purchasable at the "Medical Halls" of the European traders in the cantonments of Allahabad and Agra.

round that the Nawab Umdatul-mulk, the head of native society, beloved for his charities, and respected for his virtues, was dead, and that his bier was even now in the Great Mosque. It was the popular idea that the plague would not be stayed until some great man was taken; and, strange to say, so it happened, for from this time things began to mend; the shops were reopened,* and the business of life recommenced.

Nussooh shared the general sense of relief; and one day he suggested to his wife that, as they had not tasted rice for two months, they might venture on a *pulao* for the evening meal. They all enjoyed the treat; but Nussooh awoke in the night with a burning pain, feeling desperately ill. He hurried outside into the courtyard, and began to pace up and down the verandah, determined not to succumb; but the terrible vomiting came on. The household was soon alarmed, and the hearts of all sank within them at the sight of their master's seizure. One brought one thing and one another, and all babbled in confusion and dismay. What could it be? The *pulao*? the cooking-vessels? Oh! there was no cause for anxiety—a little aniseed and rose-water, and he would soon be well!

For his own part the sufferer felt his hours were numbered. The symptoms gradually became worse. Chilliness, cramp, and thirst told their tale. It was

* The closing of the shops in the bazar is a sign of public distress.

hardly light when the native physician was called in. He dreaded the very name of cholera, but could hardly refuse to come at his neighbour's summons. He came, and that was all. What was the use of such a prescription as iced water and pounded cocoanut? A man was despatched in haste to the Dispensary. Back came the English doctor like an echo. He gave four pills there and then, and a sedative, and had the patient laid in a private room, with orders that he should be kept perfectly quiet, and, with the comforting assurance that if he slept he would recover, promised that he would call again.

And what were Nussooh's feelings? His friends thought he was insensible; but he heard all that passed, and was absorbed in the expectation of coming death. How was he to enter upon that endless journey whence none returned? How part from his belongings with no hope of restoration or recovery? How leave the world before he had done with its delights and cares? His wife would be a lonely widow, and there were two unmarried daughters. He remembered the miserable trouble of his eldest daughter's marriage, and sighed to think how the others could be settled. There was no guardian, no one to take the lead, for his eldest son was not to be depended upon. The second boy was at college reading for the Entrance Examination.* How could he be expected to continue his

* The matriculation examination of the Calcutta University

studies when his father's eye was closed and there was no one to look after him? Then, again, he had just bought a village, and the parties had not yet given him full possession. His venture in indigo had yielded no returns. He was about to enlarge his house, for they had no guest-chamber. The timber had been bought in the Doon,* and the bricks bargained for; but nothing had yet been delivered. These and other matters who was to arrange? Could he but have lived a few years longer, all would have been well. The marriage of his daughters, the education of his sons, and the settlement of his affairs could have been provided for. It was not that he feared to die; for he told himself that, once born into the world, a man must die: but to die thus unseasonably was like dying twice. It was a wrong to himself and his dependents.

Hitherto Nussooh had lived a self-contained kind of life. He was not a domestic man, fond of his children, or devoted to his family duties, and would rarely interfere in the affairs of the household except at his wife's instance. He had made the mistake of supposing that he was independent of others, and that his own life was all he had to care for, and he had selfishly neglected everything but his own convenience. He was indifferent to the sorrows of humanity, and sometimes wondered that, if men were wretched, they should be loath to die;

* Dehra Doon, at the foot of the Himalayas, about 100 miles north of Dehli, noted for its timber-forest.

but now that it was his own turn to face the end, he suddenly found he had a wife and children to love, and possessions to cling to. A vast journey was before him, which he was not prepared to undertake. The railway whistle had sounded, and he was yet outside the station tying up his bundles.

His thoughts had run on thus far when the doctor's sleeping-draught began to take effect; and he had no sooner closed his eyes than the reflections of his wearied brain passed off into the fantastic realism of the land of dreams.

A building of imposing dimensions and weird grandeur stood before him, and, rightly taking it to be some great Court of Justice, he entered among the throng within; but, to his astonishment, instead of the busy clamour of the tribunals he had been accustomed to, an anxious silence oppressed the senses. The majesty of the President was such that of the thousands present none dared speak. There were no pleaders or attorneys—no by-play of bribery and subornation. All were convinced of the justice and discernment of the great Chief of the assembly. So vast were his powers that there was no appeal, no possibility of revision of judgment. The day's proceedings were never left unfinished. No matter how many cases were on the file, all were heard; and it was no cursory hearing, for the evidence was fully weighed, every objection considered, every argument followed out, and judgment given at the appointed time;

and more than this, every criminal was convinced of his guilt and acknowledged the justice of his sentence. Each prisoner had a copy of his indictment, and all had leisure to prepare their defence and consider how they might rebut the charges brought against them.

Passing thence he reached the House of Detention, where persons whose cases were not yet called were confined in separate cells, or otherwise awaited orders; and hard by was the Gaol, a scene of hideous penalty and correction. Here and there, to his amazement, he recognized former friends and fellow-citizens, and by and by the well-known figure of his venerable father met his astonished gaze. He ran to embrace him, and exclaimed, "Dear father, so lately lost, why are you here? and what place is this?"

"I am here," was the reply, "to give an account of my sins. This great tribunal is the Court of Divine Justice, of which the Most High is the sole and supreme Judge."

"But, Sir, yours was a life of piety and self-restraint; of what sin can you be guilty?"

"Not of one sin, my son, but of hundreds and thousands. Look at this long list! I am utterly at a loss what plea for pardon I can urge."

Nussooh examined the list, and saw with unspeakable surprise the mention of such charges as infidelity, blasphemy, rebellion, pride, falsehood, &c., to each of which, instead of marginal references to the Indian Penal Code, were attached texts from the Koran.

“And are you really guilty of these offences?” he presently asked his father.

“Of all of them,” was the answer.

“Have you pleaded guilty before the Judge?”

“To plead not guilty would have been of no avail,” returned the old man.

“But who are the witnesses against you?” said his son.

“In the first place there are the Recording Angels, who have kept a diary of my life, every line of which is true. In the second place, all my members bear testimony against me. I thought them part of myself—my associates and friends; but I now find they were spies and informers.”

“Has, then, your case been heard?” inquired the son.

“God grant it never may!” replied his father; “would that I might remain in the tomb for ever! I see no hope of salvation now.”

“And can no one help you in this strait?” anxiously asked Nussooh.

“Yes, indeed,” said his father: “only lately, one of my fellow-criminals received his pardon. He was summoned before the Tribunal and thus addressed: ‘Thou hast now learned the enormity of thy deeds. But several of my servants—to wit, thy wife and children—have prayed earnestly in thy behalf; and it is a point in thy favour that thou hast sown in their hearts the

seeds of virtue and religion. Go: I have pardoned thee.' Ah! my son, have you and others of the family thus prayed for me?"

"Alas, father, no," sorrowfully replied Nussooh. "We mourn your loss, and shall never forget you. We paid the last honours with exemplary piety and zeal; but we have not prayed for you, and have been engaged in quarrelling over the inheritance instead. But say, father, do not your own good deeds on earth serve you now? Is your diligence in fasting and alms-giving of no avail?"

"Why not?" replied his father. "Otherwise you had not found me here under comparatively mild restraint. But sincerity of motive is the test of merit; and I now recognise the fact that my prayers were not really from the heart, and might have been left unsaid; and that my fasts were starvation to no good purpose."

"And is there no one to intercede on your behalf?"

"No one, my son. Each has his own affairs to look to, and must answer for himself without a mediator."

Lost in dismay, Nussooh presently exclaimed: "But my dear and honoured father, what is the meaning of this charge of infidelity? All the world testified to your piety and devotion! Did you not believe in God, when every act of your life attested the integrity of your faith?"

"Ah! my son, listen to what was said to me when I was first arraigned. 'Who is thy God?' was the

first question ; and fresh from the religious services at my death-bed, I replied glibly, ‘ *There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the Prophet of God.* ’ ‘ What ? ’ (was the reply) ‘ when long ago thou wast in despair of obtaining service, and on the point of starvation, didst thou not pray to me for assistance, ignorant that I was testing thy patience and resignation ; and when, unknown to thee, I put it into the heart of a District officer, my servant as well as thou, to promise thee an appointment, didst thou not think this was the result of thy own sagacity ? Didst thou not place more reliance on the spoken word of the Englishman than on my written bond—‘ *Not a creature on earth but God provides for it* ’ ?

“ ‘ If thou sincerely believedst that I was omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, how daredst thou commit iniquity ? I created thee out of nothing, and clothed thee with the robe of humanity, and supplied all thy wants, and reared thee from childhood, and gave thee reason for thy guide, that thou mightest provide thyself with the means of lawful enjoyment : yet, proud of thy frail existence, thou thoughtest thyself independent of my authority, and rebelledst against obedience. If air and food had been withheld for a brief space, thou wouldst have died. I created for thy benefit the sun, the moon, and the stars of heaven,—earth’s varied landscapes, its trees and fruits and flowers. Was it for this that thou shouldst thanklessly spurn my favours ?

A little insect might have sufficed for thy destruction. The materials of disease were so abundant in thy constitution, that the simplest disorder might have ended thy existence, without my protecting care. How hast thou requited my forbearance and friendliness?

“ ‘ When I sent thee into the world, I gave thee a precious jewel, thy immortal soul, with charge to keep it unsullied and uninjured. How hast thou this day restored it? Dim and lustreless as a broken potsherd. I desired thee not to fix thy affections on the world, but lodge therein as a traveller in an inn. Thou hast made it thy home, and slept in forgetfulness to wake in the tomb.

“ ‘ Thou hast neglected my ordinances from the first, or made them part of the round of fashion. I ordained a month’s fast,* for thy bodily health, and to remind thee of the wants of the poor and hungry, and to teach thee the virtue of humility: but with thy belly full the whole year round, how grudgingly didst thou comply! The sun had no sooner set than thou devouredst enough for two days, and then wentest to thy rest grumbling at the loss of to-morrow’s breakfast. Thou lookedst for the Eed, as a prisoner for the day of his release.

“ ‘ I bade thee be charitable and remember the poor and unfortunate of thy fellows. So far from this, thou hast

* The ninth month of the lunar year, called *Ramazan*, during which pious Moslems fast from dawn to sunset. It is extremely trying when the month falls in the hot season. The *Eed*, or “feast,” at its close, is the *Eedu-l-F’itr*, which is observed on the first day of the tenth month as a time of joy and merriment.

enslaved them in the pursuit of thy own selfish lusts. Men pined in cold and starvation around thee, while thou wast physicking for surfeit, or reposing beneath costly quilts. Thou hast wasted the wealth I gave thee in luxury and ostentation.

“ ‘ My commands were not harsh or unreasonable, for cruelty is not my attribute. Thy disobedience is without excuse. Would that during life thou hadst felt even a passing concern for the salvation thou now so passionately desirest ! Would that, in place of the world’s paltry interests, thou hadst thought of the neglect of thy religion and its consequences !

“ ‘ I am aware that thy repentance is bitter now, but it comes too late. Thou art speechless. I grant thee time to prepare thy defence, and to try to find a plea for thine acquittal.’ ”

CHAPTER II.

NUSSOOH'S AWAKENING.

HIS father's recital was no sooner ended than Nussooh awoke from his dream. He was lying as before, and his wife was fanning him. He had slept from eight till two; but when she asked him how he felt and told him how anxious they had all been, he made no response. She supposed his weakness and prostration made him disinclined to speak. Nevertheless, the general uneasiness was relieved, and the family began to talk of the festivities they would have to celebrate his recovery.

Nussooh was wrapt in the recollection of his dream, which he believed was a special message sent by God in his behalf. Every syllable of what he had heard was impressed upon his memory; and the more he reflected the more he was driven to admit that he himself was guilty of all the sins laid to his father's charge—nay, more, that there was no comparison between them; for his father had been regular in his

attention to his religious duties, and was known for his austerity and self-denial; whereas he, the son, had altogether disregarded the worship of God, and was, in fact, utterly irreligious. Of course he had observed the Eeds, for these were occasions of rejoicing, when men would parade the bazar in brand-new clothes, or ride their horses through the crowds, or loll in borrowed or hired vehicles with forerunners to shout "Make way."

As to the Friday* service, Nussooh was one of those who went to the mosque if his clothes were clean and the day was not too hot, or the sky too cloudy, or if he wanted to meet his acquaintance; and anyhow, the observance of Friday was a matter about which opinions differed. He had altogether neglected "the five times of prayer." Morning, noon, and night prayers he had never said all his life; and as to the afternoon, there was taking the air, going to the bazar, calling, visiting, and what not, to be got through. Evening prayer was indeed left, but how was he to find time for that? The rosy tints of twilight would be fading away before he could return from his rambles.

As for duties which involved some little personal trouble, he had simply shirked them. When *Rajab*† came, and Lent approached, it was easy to feign indisposition, and resort to a physician (one of the gentle-

* This is the day on which the *Khutbah* is read in the Mosque. It is not a Sabbath in the Jewish sense.

† The seventh month of the lunar year.

men who make such a fuss about the difficulty of living this short life, that according to their account no one was ever well), and get a certificate of inability to fast.

The alms-tax* on his property was comfortably evaded by a temporary deed of transfer to his wife before the year ended; or he invested his money in such a way as to be exempt, or contracted with his tenants to pay the dues.

He could not recall a single honestly good deed, and confessed within himself that he had eluded obedience to the divine commands by every turn and shift. Stricken with remorse he cried: "O God! that I should have been the vilest of thy creatures! Would that I had never been born, or born without the power of committing sin, or that I had died an infant! Why did I live so long? Why have I recovered now? Shame on me if I ever wilfully transgress again!"

And then he thought of his wife and children. In ruining himself he had ruined them. God had made him the head of a family, and entrusted him with the care of the souls and bodies of its members; but he had betrayed his trust. And as his children were, so would their children be. He had sown the seeds of an ever-spreading jungle of iniquity. What account was he to render before the great Tribunal? He wept with anguish at the thought of his misused life and wasted oppor-

* The *zakāt* is payable on property which has been held one complete year.

tunities, and vowed that henceforward he would devote himself to the reformation of his household. Alas! that here piety and religion were unknown and unfamiliar. He would have all against him. *When the drums beat, who listens to the parrot? Gram parching in the oven was not more helpless.* His wife, Fah-meedah, indeed, he remembered with satisfaction, was to some extent an educated woman. About the time of her marriage female education had begun to be talked of, and he had read with approval some books which had appeared on the subject. The consequence was that he had himself taught her to read and write, and she had made fair progress till her increasing family and the cares of a large household interrupted her studies. Intelligent as she was, both by name and nature, her husband was assured that he would have no difficulty in persuading her to adopt his views. The chief trouble, he foresaw, would be with the elder children. One son and daughter were married; and, though still under the paternal roof, it would be impossible to insist upon their obedience in matters of this sort, and they would be sure to retort that they lived as they were taught, and that it was unfair to ask them to give up habits which, right or wrong, had now become part of their nature.

Nussooh was not the man to let his determination sleep. One morning, when he had scarcely recovered strength to move, he told his wife to order water for his bath, as he intended to get up.

"Nonsense!" said Fahmeedah, "you are not well enough to leave your bed yet. When you can use your limbs and get about as usual, you can go to the Hummam."

"I tell you I must perform my devotions; my illness has caused all kinds of irregularity, and things can't go on in this way any longer."

"Devotions!" exclaimed his wife. "Do you mean to say you have vowed to turn saint when you get well?"

Her surprise at the bare idea was a bitter pill to Nussooh, and he sighed :

"Ah! it would have been better for us all if I had been devout!"

"Oh! if you haven't made a vow, you need not mind: the prayers won't run away. Wait till you get well," she laughingly replied.

Nussooh was exceedingly vexed at his wife's levity, and would have scolded her but that he remembered her ideas were but the reflex of what his own had been. He had no one but himself to thank for her profanity. He replied with gentleness :

"Alas! that my evil companionship has taught you to trifle with the commands of God!"

No more was said. Observing her husband's mood, Fahmeedah ceased her dissuasions; and Nussooh had no sooner bathed and dressed than he stood up to pray. It was a painful sight to see him tottering and falling as he tried, in his feebleness, to go through the pre-

scribed attitudes of adoration ; but for the first time in his life he felt he had been engaged in genuine worship.

It was not till the tenth week that he regained his strength. He was now a changed man. There was no longer any self-pleasing and worldliness. He made his religious duties his first consideration, and his temper became mild and courteous to those about him. Before his illness he had been the bugbear of the household. He had no sooner entered a room than everybody was in a fright. If anything was wrong, the storm fell upon, all alike. If the dishes had too much or too little salt, the whole family lost their meal, and such was the smashing of the crockery that all the neighbours knew that the dinner had gone wrong. He was always scolding and nagging at the children. Now they might beat a kettle over his head, and he would take no notice. Everybody was puzzled. All took it for granted that, when he got well, his temper would be worse than ever, and they wondered when the outbreak would come. But no—instead of an increase of savagery, he became tender-hearted. He ate contentedly what was put before him, and wore the clothes laid out for him without finding fault. And, as his treatment of others changed, so they too became different. Respect and affection began to take the place of dislike ; and the family squabbles seemed to be charmed away.

His attention to his religious duties at first created some surprise ; and though the novelty soon wore off,

a certain effect was produced by his example, which emboldened him to delay no longer the execution of his projects of reform. As it happened, Fahmeedah herself opened the subject by asking him one day if he was not tired of the solitude of his apartment, and of the meditations he now so constantly indulged in ; and she went on to say that she and all the rest were at a loss to account for his altered habits and apparent indifference to society.

“ And what reason do people assign for this change in my behaviour of which you speak ? ” inquired Nussooh.

“ They say it is the cholera, and that the sight of so many deaths, and at last your own seizure and illness, have made you melancholy. Your eldest son says the medicine the doctor gave you has gone to your head.”

“ Gone to my head ! Indeed, no ! I have kept my senses from first to last, and know everything that went on,” remarked her husband ; “ but now listen to what I have to tell you.”

Nussooh then related to his wife the circumstances of his dream in detail. The minds of women are softer and more impressionable than those of men, and this is one reason why they are readily influenced by religious instruction.

Fahmeedah was thoroughly alarmed, and equally with her husband saw in what had occurred a divine warning for their future amendment ; but, less confident than he

of the clemency of God, she despaired of forgiveness for their past neglect of duty. Touched by the sincerity of her fears and grief, Nussooh comforted her by the assurance of the infinitude of God's mercy, and of the certainty of the pardon which followed true repentance, and invited her to join him in his supplications for divine assistance in the reformation of their household.

When they began to talk of their children, Nussooh was vehement in his self-reproaches.

"Alas!" said he, "that I, who should have been, their guide to virtue, have shown them the path to ruin: that I should have been their enemy and not their friend! I have been the embodiment of a bad example. Would that my evil shadow had never fallen on their heads! Whatever they do that is bad is of my teaching; and they cannot well be worse than they are."

"Look at our eldest son!" he continued in the bitterness of his spirit; "he is always on the strut, like a fantail, neck and nape all in one! His clothes look as if they had been sown on the coxcomb's body! There are gathers in his pantaloons, and his cap is no bigger than a saucer! The second ne'er-do-weel is always on the roof flying his pigeons till he is driven off to school. He is kite-flying all the afternoon, and quail-fighting is his holiday amusement. The third is a positive nuisance to the neighbourhood. All are equally foul-mouthed, vicious, and unmannerly. As for the girls, they think of nothing but their dolls and dresses, and

their language is abominable. But we have to thank ourselves. What was the use of nagging and finding fault? We should have checked the mischief at the first."

"It was all my foolish fondness," cried Fahmeedah; "for, when you reproved them, I encouraged them. Children follow the mother's lead."

"It was not more your fault than mine," said her husband. "I had the authority as master and failed to exercise it. But, tell me, what are we to do now?"

"We cannot do anything that I can see," replied his wife.

"What! would you leave them alone in their evil courses?" cried he. "God forbid! They would but become worse."

"It is all very well to say, 'God forbid'; but in my judgment they are beyond reform. Can you teach old parrots to talk? Can you bend into shape a seasoned piece of wood? What can I do? My daughters treat and despise me as a companion: my sons care less than nothing for what I say. I may call and call, but they never once turn to look behind them."

"But surely," said he, "you admit that it is a mother's duty to look to her children's interests. Do you remember one day, when I was taking one of the children to see the doctor, you made me wait to have the child properly cleaned and dressed, lest the doctor should say you were a slattern mother? How will it be when these children of ours take their impure and sin-stained

souls into the presence of the Almighty ? What answer will you give ? If we have been foolish in the past, that is no reason why we should neglect the future. The end may be the same in not succeeding in our endeavours, and in not endeavouring at all ; but the fact of our having endeavoured will be a plea for our forgiveness."

But Fahmeedah was still despondent. She knew, she said, every vein and fibre of her elder children's bodies, and was hopeless of persuading them to change the habits which had grown up with them from infancy. No amount of beating, she urged, would shape cold iron.

"Yes," said her husband, taking the cue from her own words, "hard substances need strong solvents. Our measures must accord with our determination."

And then the mother's instincts took alarm, and she exclaimed :

"Oh ! no harshness, please. It will only make them turn against us more. And, besides, what will people say ? "

"What do I care for what people say ? " replied her husband. "I have my duty to do, and I must do it. You need not be alarmed, however ; for I, too, am disposed to think that compulsion will be ineffective ; and, for that matter, it is I rather who deserve harsh treatment than my children. A due admixture of kindness and severity will be the best mode of dealing with them ;

as a poet says, ‘ *Lancet and ointment both the surgeon tries.*’ Our children are human, and, therefore, rational ; and I hope, God willing, to make them understand that their own good for time and for eternity is my object. But I can do nothing without your assistance.”

“ And you shall have it,” she heartily responded ; “ but I confess I am absolutely powerless with regard to the elder children.”

“ Then do you undertake the little ones,” replied Nussooh, “ and leave me to deal with my sons.”

“ Willingly,” said his wife ; “ I shall have no difficulty with them, for *it is easy work pinching wax noses.* I wish you could have heard the talk I had with Humeedah the other day. The darling is only six years old, but she has the brains of sixty.”

“ Tell me what occurred,” said Nussooh.

CHAPTER III.

FAHMEEDAH'S CONVERSATION WITH HER SECOND
DAUGHTER, HUMEEDAH.

FAHMEEDAH replied : " She has noticed you at your devotions, and not long ago she said, ' Why does father wash his hands and face so often ? And what does he do standing with his hands joined, whispering and muttering, and then bowing down and falling on his face ? ' I told her you were saying your prayers ; and then she asked me what prayers were. This was the first pinch. I replied, ' Oh, my dear ! prayer is the worship of God.' ' Who is God ? ' said she. ' And what is worship ? '

" I felt as if my hair would stand on end ; and all I could say was, ' Surely you know who God is ? ' ' No, mother,' she said, ' I don't. I often hear you all swearing by God, but I don't know what you mean. Perhaps it is the name of something to frighten people by.' ' Hush, my dear ! ' said I. ' What are you saying ?

God is our Maker : He feeds us, and if He pleases can put an end to our existence.' 'Did God really make you, mother,' she said, 'and father, and baby too?' 'Yes, darling,' I replied, 'He made all of us.' She remained thinking awhile, and then said, 'Mother, you said God feeds us; but is not our food cooked here for us every day?' I explained to her that God caused the rain to fall, and the corn and fruit to grow; and she asked, 'But why is God so kind to us? Are we related to Him in any way?' 'We are His servants and dependents,' I said. 'But, mother,' she went on, 'servants wait on their masters and serve them. What service do we do for God?' 'We say prayers and worship Him,' I replied, 'just as you saw your father doing.' 'But oughtn't we all to do it?' she asked.

I could only whisper, 'Yes, dear, we ought'; and then the child said reproachfully, 'Mother, dear, you don't say prayers, do you?' I could have sunk into the earth for shame, as I replied, 'You know, dear, some servants are idle and faithless. I am one of these.' And then she gravely said, 'Why didn't my father say his prayers before he was ill? Did not God feed him before?'"

It was now Nussooh's turn to wince. He was unable to restrain his tears any longer. Fahmeedah, too, was much moved, and she continued presently:

"I told her you had been a bad servant as well as myself; and then she asked if God was not very angry,

and the thought seemed to strike her that perhaps God would not provide food for us any longer, or send milk for her little sister, and she burst into tears. I thought she would never leave off, and I took her in my arms and fondled her, and tried to comfort her by saying that, though God might be angry, He never deprived His servants of their food. She was quiet after awhile, but her mind was still uneasy, and she said, 'But, mother, when our servants don't do their work, father cuts their pay or sends them away. We ought to do some service for God, oughtn't we? And I have never said any prayers.' And then she began to cry again, till I told her God was not angry with little children who were too young to pray. Presently she whispered, 'Mother dear, I get nicer things to eat than all the others—can't I do something for the good God? I do things for you, don't I, mother?' 'Yes, darling!' I said, 'you fan me sometimes, and bring things for me, and thread my needle, and mind baby.' 'Then why can't I do something for God? I could stand up and fold my hands like father does.' 'But, my child, father has to say things as well. He praises and thanks God, and confesses his sins, and asks for forgiveness; and he says it in Arabic too.' 'Oh!' she cried in a dejected tone, 'must we know Arabic to pray to God?' 'No, dear!' I said; 'God knows all languages. And not only this, He knows our thoughts and intentions, for He is present everywhere. He is in this house, though

we can't see Him.' On this she crept close to me, and drew on her veil, and hurriedly whispered, 'Mother, cover your head!' She said no more, but seemed oppressed with awe, and after a time went fast asleep in my arms, till my legs ached with carrying her. I laid her gently on the bed, and told Bedará to sit by and hold her hand, for fear she should wake up in a fright. Humeedah's talk has shaken my nerves. To think that a baby like that should have such notions. I can't think what has come to her."

Presently Nusssooh observed: "It is the beauty of religion that it comes within the intelligence of young as well as old. It is not, like men's puzzles, a matter of ingenious contriving. The pity is that man shuts his eyes and forgets his Maker. And yet reason was given to him that he might study the works of God. As Sadi says, '*Every leaf is a page in the book of the Creator's knowledge.*' Humeedah has put us all to shame in the innocence of her childish instincts. She is an angel in the house: and thank God that for one at least of our little ones we need have no misgivings. Let us take her words as an omen of success, and carry out our good resolutions with cheerfulness and unanimity, for we must work together and show no signs of giving way."

"Please God, it shall be so," rejoined Fahmeedah.

CHAPTER IV.

NUSSOOH TALKS WITH HIS YOUNGEST SON,
SULLEEM.

NEXT day the youngest boy, Sulleem, was awakened by Bedará with a message that his father wanted to speak to him. He was only ten years old, and, alarmed at the unusual summons, he washed his hands and face, and ran to ask his mother why his father had sent for him, and if he was angry.

"How can I tell," she said, "he hasn't been down stairs yet."

"Bedará, do you know anything?"

"All that I know is that master was sitting reading, and when I passed his door, he told me to call you."

"I wonder if he is angry," said the boy. "Mother, you'll come with me, won't you?"

"No, I can't leave baby. What are you afraid of? If your father questions you, mind you answer him properly."

At last Sulleem ventured up-stairs, and timidly entering his father's room made his obeisance, and stood at a respectful distance. His father called him to come and sit beside him, and said pleasantly :

“ So you haven't gone to school yet, my boy.”

“ No, Sir, it wants an hour to the time yet.”

“ Do you go to school with your second brother, or alone ? ” inquired his father.

“ Generally I go alone, Sir. The examination comes off next month, and my brother is working for it. He rises very early and goes to a schoolfellow's, and I meet him at school afterwards.”

“ Why does he do that ? is there no room for him to study here ? ”

“ He says that chess and cards are always going on in our part of the house, and he can't work in peace,” replied Sulleem.

“ Ah ! I daresay you play chess, don't you ? ” remarked his father with a smile.

“ I know the moves, Sir, but I don't care about playing.”

“ Perhaps it is too difficult for you. You prefer cards ? ”

“ No, Sir, I like cards still less.”

“ Well, but how is this ? Not so long ago you were always playing at some game or other. There must be some special reason,” said his father, rather astonished at the boy's words and manner.

“ I will tell you, Sir,” replied Sulleen, who was fast losing his dread of his father. “ Have you noticed the four boys who pass our house every day together, with books under their arms ? ”

“ What ? those quiet-looking boys with pale faces, hair close cut, trousers up to the ankle, and low coats ? * Well, what then ? ”

“ You may well call them quiet, Sir. They have lived in our quarter ever so long, and scarcely anyone knows them. They are four brothers, and go to our school ; and they never quarrel or fight, or call names or swear, or use bad language, or tease. And during the recess they always go to the mosque near the school.”

“ Good ! and what then ? ”

“ The third brother is in my class ; and one day the Maulvi Sahib was very angry with me for not knowing my lesson, and said, pointing to him, ‘ Why don’t you go and study with that boy ? He lives close by your father’s.’ I asked the boy to let me come, and he gladly agreed. So next day I went ; and the first thing I saw was an old lady, called Huzrut Bee, the boys’ grandmother, who has charge of them ; but I took no notice of her, and went and sat down by my class-fellow. When she had finished what she was doing, she said,

* These are prescribed tokens of sobriety ; and may be taken as an unflinching indication of character, except in cases where imposture is intended.

‘How is it, my boy, that you forgot to salaam to me when you came in? Gentlemen’s sons are respectful to their seniors; and if you are to associate with my grandsons, I expect you to behave as they do.’ I was very much ashamed, and fell at her feet to beg pardon. And then she gave me some sweeties in token of forgiveness, and has ever since loved me and treated me like her own grandsons, and given me good advice. This is the reason why I don’t care any more for cards and chess.”

Nussooh was much pleased, and said he had told a capital story, and asked him to go on with it. The boy’s tongue was loosed by this time, and he went on :—

“One day I had a quarrel with a boy in the bazar close to her house; hard words and abuse first, and then blows. I gave him a sound drubbing, and the bystanders cried ‘Bravo!’ and tried to drag me off him, for I was very angry. At last my school-fellow came out, and pulled me into the house; and I don’t know what nonsense I talked in the heat of the moment; but Huzrut Bee said presently, ‘Sulleem, I am sorry you have been such a bad boy, and used such bad language too. My advice has been thrown away. I must give up living here if this is to go on at my very doors.’ ‘I swear it wasn’t my fault,’ I cried; ‘the grocer’s boy provoked me.’ And then she said, ‘You need not swear; people who swear will say anything. I am very

much displeased with you, and you have disgraced yourself by brawling in the bazar. It takes two to make a quarrel, and I don't see that there is anything to choose between you and the other boy, though you are a gentleman's son and he is not. Men are honoured for their own worth, and not for their ancestors.' I had cooled down by this time, and was so ashamed of myself that I began to cry. Huzrut Bee made me sit down by her, and kissed me, and said, 'I speak, dear, for your good. You know, after a time bad habits like these are very hard to get rid of'; and she ended by making me promise never to swear, or use bad language again, or fight in the bazar. Some time after this, Huzrut Bee asked me how I spent my time, and I reckoned up the hours I spent in eating and drinking and sleeping, and at school, and in playing and amusements. She sighed and said, 'Sulleem, do you do nothing at all for God in the twenty-four hours? He has made you a member of a respectable family, the son of well-to-do parents. You might have been the child of a labourer or woodman, and have had to work all day with nothing but parched grain to eat, and no clothes. Instead of being loveable and comely, you might have been blind and deformed. Do you never thank Him, or bow your head to Him in worship?' And then she taught me a prayer, and explained its meaning, and I promised not to neglect saying it."

At this point Sulleem was silent, and his eyes filled

with tears as he added, after a pause, "But I have now left off going to her house for a long time."

"Why?" asked his father, noticing his emotion. "You haven't quarrelled with your friends, have you?"

"Oh no! not that. I love them better than my own brothers."

"Then, perhaps, Huzrut Bee is angry with you for something?"

"Oh no, Father. Huzrut Bee is too good to be angry with anyone."

"Has anyone forbidden you to go?" said his father, somewhat sternly, for he suspected the reason.

"No, Sir!" sobbed Sulleem.

"Boy, what is the reason? I wish to know."

"Please don't ask me, Sir. I must not tell tales, for Huzrut Bee said it was wrong."

"Sulleem, you must tell me. I command you, as a father."

The boy no longer hesitated. Drying his tears, he said:

"Huzrut Bee once expressed a wish that I should have my long hair * cut off, and said that I wasted my time over it, and that it was no good. I knew she would say nothing that it was not right for me to do; and the next time the barber came to shave my eldest brother I asked him to cut away my hair. I can't tell

* Long hair is a mark of being "fast" and gay. See note on page 30.

you how angry my eldest brother was. I didn't mind his abusing me, but he said cruel things of Huzrut Bee and her boys."

"What has he got to do with Huzrut Bee, or with you either, for that matter?" indignantly exclaimed his father.

"He had found out I went to her house, and had abused her on other occasions. He told me to have my hair cut if I dared; and asked me if I wanted to turn fukeer or saint."

"And what answer did you give to him?"

"Of course I could not answer back my eldest brother; and if I had, he would have half killed me. The result was that, as I could not have my hair cut, I was ashamed for some time to go near my friends. It was afterwards that I left off going altogether."

The boy again hesitated; but his father encouraged him, and he continued:

"I told you Huzrut Bee taught me to pray. It happened one day my eldest brother and his companions saw me. They jeered at me, and pushed me off the prayer-carpet, and sat upon me, and I haven't dared to say my prayers since; and what with shame at breaking my promise and not having my hair cut short, it is now three months since I have been to Huzrut Bee's; and my class-fellow, too, has been ill all the time, and I haven't gone to see him."

"But why didn't you speak to me?" asked his father.

“ Because I thought it would be telling tales behind my brother’s back.”

“ But you might have spoken to me before his face.”

“ I daren’t do that, father. He would have beaten me afterwards when you went away.”

“ Has he ever beaten you, then ? ”

“ Oh yes, often and often,” said the boy.

“ Why didn’t you tell your mother ? ”

“ For the same reason.” And then, after a pause, he added, “ Besides, as no one cared for religion in the house, I thought perhaps you would all be angry with me like my eldest brother.”

“ Poor boy ! ” said his father, gently ; “ you have passed the last few months very unhappily.”

“ Oh, father ! I can’t tell you how unhappily. People say, ‘ *Room for a dog, but not for a younger brother,* ’ and I know now how true it is.”

“ Well, now, wouldn’t you like to go to Huzrut Bee’s again ? ”

“ Indeed I should ; but I am ashamed to go till my hair is cut, and I can say that I have kept my word about saying my prayers.”

“ And supposing you can do this, what then ? ”

“ Oh, then our house would be like Huzrut Bee’s ; and I should be quite happy.”

Nussooh was deeply touched by the boy’s artless words, and exclaimed, in remorseful tones : “ A wretched sinful house is ours, indeed ! The fault is mine. No

punishment would be too bad for me. I cared nothing for my children's welfare, and have utterly neglected my duties! My dear Sulleem, you shall do all you wish. I will go with you myself to Huzrut Bee, and thank her for all her goodness, and for doing what I should have done myself. Henceforward you shall be dearer to me than all my children."

CHAPTER V.

FAHMEEDAH'S QUARREL WITH HER ELDEST
DAUGHTER NAEEMAH.

WHILE father and son were thus conversing, a very different scene was being enacted in the zenana, and this was nothing less than a quarrel between Fahmeedah and her favourite daughter Naeemah.

At this time Naeemah had been two years married, and had a baby a few months old. She was naturally ill-tempered, and the petting she had received from her earliest years had completely spoiled her : as the proverb says, "*It was the Kurela on the Neem.*"* It was unlikely such a girl could get on with her husband's family. Her first unveiling there was, so to speak, her last, for she soon returned to her mother's house. "*A burnt rope retains its twist,*" and she came back worse

* The proverb means bitterer and bitterer. The *Kurelā* is a bitter parasite, and the *Neem* a bitter tree.

than she was before. When her son was born she became unbearable.

When, therefore, Fahmeedah undertook the reformation of her daughter's habits, she knew what was before her, and felt as if she had to put her hand in a hornet's nest. She thought of a hundred plans, but the very sight of Naeemah upset them. As it happened, Naeemah herself brought on the crisis.

Early that morning she had given her baby to Humeedah to hold while she herself washed and dressed; and Humeedah, finding that the hour of prayer was slipping by, put down the child and began her devotions. What was to be expected from the child of such a mother? It began to scream. Naeemah rushed in to see what was the matter, and, seizing her baby, went up to her sister and knocked her flat down upon the floor. A minute afterwards Fahmeedah came into the room, and, seeing her little daughter on the floor with the blood streaming from her face, asked in alarm what had happened.

"Happened, indeed!" screamed Naeemah. "I just gave her my baby to hold, and the slut put him down to say her prayers. I gave her a push, and some nail in the floor must have scratched her!"

"A push, indeed!" cried her mother. "She is covered with blood. Had you no pity for the poor child?"

"If she had any pity herself she wouldn't have set the baby crying in that way."

“She was quite right to put the child down. She had her prayers to say.”

“Bother her prayers! Is she to love her prayers better than her nephew?”

“Naeemah, you are blasphemous. Think of God’s anger, and mend your own ways before you sneer at hers.”

“What ways?” cried the angry Naeemah.

“Why, here you are, a married woman, in your father’s house still! Too ill-tempered to live with your husband’s family!” replied her mother.

“The family may go to ——! If you married me into such a family, you must take the consequences. I didn’t want to be pushed into a well with my eyes open!”

“Hush, my dear! We shall see what you do with your own children, when the time comes!”

“I shan’t take your advice, at any rate,” sneered her daughter.

“I didn’t offer it. I hope you’ll ask God to help you.”

“God, indeed! I can manage for myself.”

Fahmeedah was now unable to control her indignation, and threatened:

“If you speak like that again, I shall box your ears!”

“A likely story! Strike your pet daughter, indeed!” laughed Naeemah in derision.

"I have done with pets and profanity, I can tell you."

"Oh! have you? And since when, may I ask?"

"Since God taught me," gravely replied her mother.

"All right! When I am as old as you I'll learn too!" jeered the daughter.

"Pray, how do you know you will live to be as old?"

"Is that an omen for my death?"

"Life and death do not come by omens. God ordains for us how long we have to live."

"That's a blessing! If you had your way you'd soon make an end of me! Humeedah is everybody now, and the rest of us are nothing. I should like to know why she is to take airs with her 'down-up' nonsense?"

To hear the divine ordinance of prayer called by this term was too much for Fahmeedah's patience, and, as she had before threatened, she slapped her daughter's face.

Naeemah's astonishment and fury passed all bounds. She would have killed her baby before their eyes if they had not torn it from her arms. Then she flung herself on the ground and rent her clothes to shreds; then tore out her hair by handfuls, and dashed her head against the wall like one possessed. Her yells were so fearful that they expected the police would arrive every moment, and the whole neighbourhood be aroused. With great

difficulty the women at length thrust her into a room by herself, and turned the key.

Nussooh's room was in another part of the house, away from the zenana, and he heard nothing unusual ; but he was presently surprised by a visit from his wife, with signs of dismay and agitation on her countenance. On his asking what was the matter, she at once described the whole circumstances. After a long silence, Nussooh looked up, and said :

“ Her blasphemy is awful. To think she should be the daughter of a Mohammadan family ! She shan't remain in the house a day longer ! If I had been there I could have drawn my sword ! Better no children at all than such a child ! Send her off to her husband's home immediately ! ”

But compunction now took the place of anger in the mother's heart, and she cried :

“ Oh, no ! I can't let her go in this fashion. Her reception there would be worse than ever.”

“ She shall pollute my house no longer, I tell you,” said her husband.

“ If you are so harsh, no one can live in the house with you at all,” rejoined the wife.

“ I am thinking of the house in which I must live hereafter. If you are so weak and vacillating, why did you agree with me to set about a reformation of our children ? ”

Fahmeedah burst into tears.

“How can I abandon my children in this way?” she moaned.

“I did not ask you to abandon them,” he replied.

“But you want me to turn Naeemah out of doors. I never struck her before. She has often said things like that, and I only laughed. I forgot the poor thing was a wife and mother.”

“Choose which you will, God or your children,” sternly replied Nussooh.

Fahmcedah’s distress was a piteous sight, as she sobbed in desperation. “Must I sacrifice my children?”

Her husband’s anger cooled at the sight of his wife’s emotion. After a pause, he asked :

“What did she do when she was put into the room?”

“What else but weep and moan? I told them to open the door and put some water for the poor thing to drink. What shall I do? She refuses to touch anything; and her baby, too, will starve.”

“This must be looked to,” said Nussooh. “I will go and speak to her myself.”

“For God’s sake, no!” exclaimed his wife.

“I will speak gently to her, I promise you.”

“A man’s gentleness! Why, you talked of your sword a moment ago! Besides, your going will do no good in her excited state, and you will have the shame of being repulsed by your own daughter. I will send

for her friend and cousin Salihah to come and talk to her."

It would have been impossible to suggest a better plan, and Nussooh gladly agreed ; for he now remembered that his sister-in-law's household, whatever he may have thought of it before, was one in which the duties of religion were not neglected. She had a large family, and was badly off ; but, as Fahmeedah remarked, no one ever heard there a whisper of discontent or of envy at the fortune of others.

"Ah !" said Nussooh, "beggars here and princes hereafter" ; adding after a time, with a qualm of conscience, "They must be badly off indeed. Can we do nothing to help them ? "

"My sister's husband," said Fahmeedah, "has only twenty rupees a month* to live on, and yet they are never in debt in the bazar, and never seem to want anything. Whenever I ask her to come here she puts me off, and says she will come to my children's weddings."

"Curious that you two should be own sisters, and yet so different !" naively remarked her husband.

So far from being hurt, the good woman was so pleased at this recognition of her sister's virtues, that she almost forgot her troubles about Naeemah, and replied :

"Ah ! when I was a girl at home, we were just alike ;

* Less than 10s. a week.

but when I married—you'll excuse my saying so—I became your pupil. Religion was tabooed in your mother's family, and by degrees I forgot my early training. When a bride leaves her home her mother entrusts her to the bridegroom's family, with the words, 'I give you this maid to wait on you'; but besides this my mother said to yours, 'Take care of her. She has been piously brought up: pray you see that she does not neglect her religious duties.' So far from this, I was left to please myself, and follow the fashions of my new zenana; and though I was ashamed of myself at first, I soon became as irreligious as the rest. Afterwards, beyond a few odd prayers when any of the children were ill, and so forth, I abandoned the worship of God entirely. Please God, things shall be different now."

And then, glancing at her husband, who seemed loath to continue the conversation, Fahmeedah went below to send a *dooli** for her niece.

* A *dooli* is a covered litter, in which ladies are carried through the streets.

CHAPTER VI.

• NUSSOOH'S INTERVIEW WITH ULLEEM, HIS
SECOND SON.

THAT same afternoon, when he had returned from prayers, Nussooh asked for his second son, Ulleem. He had just come back from college, and when he had changed his dress he waited on his father.

"Well, my boy," said Nussooh, "I hear you are working hard for your examination."

"Yes, Sir; the half-yearly examination is coming on, and I have several books to revise; but I am sorry to say I can't work at home, for the people who come to see my elder brother make too much noise. I generally study at a friend's house."

Nussooh betrayed his annoyance, but let the matter pass; and presently said in a serious tone:

"And are you preparing for the great examination?"

“There is plenty of time for that,” replied Ulleem ;
“I have to get over this one first.”

“Is the time fixed, then ? ”

“Oh yes, it is always just before the Christmas vacation.”

“Ulleem, you don’t understand my question ; I am thinking of the Great Day of Account. Is not that a great examination ? ”

“Indeed, Sir, it is. It is the hardest examination of all.”

“And have you prepared for that, my son ? ”

“No, Sir, I have not thought of it.”

“And why ? ” continued his questioner.

“I know no reason, except that one is apt to take such things easily.” And then the boy added with some hesitation : “Perhaps, too, the absence of religion in my own family has been a cause of my neglect.”

“That is true,” replied his father ; “and the fault is mine. I have purposely asked you these questions, that I may take the earliest opportunity of acknowledging my folly and forgetfulness as a father.”

“Oh ! father, the fault is my own. God gave me reason enough to understand that this life would not last for ever, and that it ought not to be passed in eating and drinking, like the lives of animals, without a thought of religious duties.”

In some astonishment at his son’s reply Nussooh remarked :

“I see that you are no stranger to the subject of religion, and yet I never took the pains to teach you. Surely they teach you nothing about religion at the college?”

“No, father. I read the Koran through like a parrot, when I was first at school; but the Persian books we read, so far from being religious, were immoral. About the time when I was reading the *Bahār-i-dānish* a Missionary used to preach in the bazar in Chandni Chauk,* and often gave away books to the bystanders. Indeed some of my school-fellows took them, and generally tore them up for kites or covers for their lesson books. I thought I would get one too; and one day I joined the crowd which was listening to the Missionary with this intention in my mind. The people were disputing with him and got very angry and impatient, whereas he had not a wrinkle on his forehead. Presently some boy called out an opprobrious epithet, and this turned the tide in the Missionary’s favour, for when the bystanders wanted to chastise the boy he said, ‘My friends, don’t hurt him; the word he used may mean a “pearl,” and perhaps that is what he meant!’ I, as well as the rest, was charmed with the Missionary’s ready forbearance; and his opponents soon afterwards went away with the remark that, whatever his religion was, he

* The name of the chief street in Dehli.

was a good man. When the crowd thinned at the conclusion of his discourse, he observed me lingering, and, divining my wish, asked if I wanted anything. I told him I should like to have a book, and, after I had chosen a nicely bound one from his box, he said I might have it if I could read it, adding that he would like to hear me read the book I was studying at school. The day's lesson was so full of nonsense and indecency that I hardly dared read it aloud before the crowd, but I managed to stammer through a few lines. He stopped me and said, very kindly and seriously, 'I am sorry I asked you to read that trash. If you will take my advice you will throw the book away. It is not only immoral, but contrary to the teaching of your creed as a Musalman.' And, curious to say, the bystanders agreed with him.

"When I got home I read the book which the Missionary gave me. It was the life of a holy man, written in easy Urdu; and I liked it very much. I learned for the first time something of my responsibilities as a human being, and the duty of sympathy with my fellows especially attracted my attention. Anyhow, I said good-bye to the *Bahār-i-dānish* from that day forward; and though my school-fellows and the Munshi himself came for me, I refused to go to school any more. At that time you were in the Deccan. As ill-luck would have it, I was out one day, and my elder brother spied the book. He wanted some paper to

make squibs for the *Shab-Barāt*,* and, when he saw what the book was, tore it up for the purpose. When I complained, he and his friends told me I had no business with such books, and asked if I meant to turn Christian. But it struck me, if Christians followed the teaching of that book, they could not be so bad as they were painted. However, some time after this I entered the Government College, and was engaged in other matters."

Nussooh, who had listened with great attention to this story, remarked :

"There is no doubt some opposition between the doctrines of Islam and Christianity, but then no two religions have so much in common. The Koran speaks well of Christianity and its professors, and their Gospel is held to be the word of God. The Musalman may lawfully eat and intermarry with the Christian, and the alienation which now characterises their relations is not sanctioned by the canon law. The best of our religious books could hardly have benefited you more than the Missionary's volume. But you said just now you had learned sympathy for others from its maxims. Tell me, have you ever put this teaching into practice?"

* The "Night of Record" is the 15th of Shabān (8th month), on which the actions of mankind for the coming year are supposed to be registered. Mahomed enjoined his followers to keep awake, and the observance of this order is aided by the noise of fireworks.

“So far, Sir,” modestly replied Ulleem, “that I never refuse assistance to my companions when they require it, even at the sacrifice of my own convenience. The last prize I got at College was in cash, and I spent it in relieving the poor people in our neighbourhood. Indeed, on one occasion my liberality got me into trouble.”

“How was that?” asked his father.

“Last Eed mother made me a beautiful cap to wear. One day I was going to see my aunt, when I was attracted by a crowd in —— Street. The Government peons were arresting a man for debt at the suit of a Bunniya. The man was a Pathan, poor but proud, and asked for time. The Bunniya was inexorable, and said with a taunt he would soon take down the Khan Sahib’s honour. The latter rushed into his house in a fury for his sword, and would have slain the Bunniya on the spot, if his wife and children had not clung to his legs, and begged him to kill them first, as they could not live without him. The Khan was moved, and instead of falling on his creditor, began to consult with his wife how they could raise money to pay the debt. Alas! there was nothing in the house but an old griddle, a hand-mill, and a few worn-out cooking pots, and a pair of thin silver bangles on his wife’s arms. The man took these things outside, and the Bunniya would not even look at them. He would have his five rupees, he said, with two more for interest,

and nothing else. The Khan's property was not worth the money, and then they bethought them of their little daughter's ear-rings. The child was about Humeedah's age, and cried so bitterly at the thought of losing her little ornaments, that I could bear it no longer. Tying a handkerchief round my head, I ran off to the bazar to sell my cap. I took the first offer—six rupees—and having another rupee in my pocket, slipped the money into the woman's hands. Her husband was being led away to prison, but the money came just in time, and he was released.

“The joy of the whole family was a sight to witness. The children danced and gambolled about their father. I should have gone off unnoticed, but that the woman suddenly remembered me, for she had hitherto not thought of thanking me. She looked at me with gratitude, and said to her children :

“ ‘ There is our benefactor, an unknown stranger, an angel sent by God in our distress ! ’

“ Surely money was never better spent. I shall not forget the scene. They made me come inside, and overwhelmed me with thanks and embraces ; and when I said the money was a gift and not a loan, their effusiveness passed all bounds. My handkerchief fell off, and the woman saw in a moment how I had got the money. I thought I should never get away.

“ I ran back home, and had no sooner turned into our alley than I met my elder brother. He stopped me, and,

pointing to my head, said I had sold my cap to get some sweetmeats. I refused to answer him. In the evening he and my mother had a quarrel. He wanted money, and she upbraided him for his extravagance; and at last a sudden thought struck him, and he said :

“ ‘It is not I who am extravagant : it is your clever second son there, who has sold his cap for a handful of sweeties ! ’

“ My mother then turned on me, and all I could say was : ‘ If he can prove it, you may punish me for a thief ! I assure you, mother, I have neither lost my cap nor sold it for sweetmeats.’

“ She saw there was a mystery, and pressed me no further. A week after, I accompanied her to my aunt’s to ask after Salihah, who was ill ; and just as we got to the door my friend the Khan passed by, and greeted me with extreme courtesy and affection. My mother saw this from inside her *dooli*, and when we got into the house asked me who he was. I said that he was a Pathan who lived in — Street, remarking that it was the custom of some folk to make a great show of friendship for even a casual acquaintance. I suppose the Khan’s wife had found out who I was, and had told my aunt the story ; for when we got home, my mother laughed, and said, ‘ Ulleem, I have found you out ! ’ I laughed, and said no more.”

“A capital story,” said Nussooh. “You have shown the noblest sympathy and kindness for your fellows. But surely, my son, your own family has the first claim on your regard.”

“Yes, father: but they are in need of nothing which I can give them.”

“My boy, sympathy does not consist merely in giving money and making presents. The truest help is that which tends to the promotion of virtue and religion; and you know well how badly we are off for these. Ulleem, I have a favour to ask you. Will you help me to effect a change for the better? I know you have forsworn pleasure and dissipation for the sake of the coming examination; will you promise me to give up your cards and pigeons and quail-fighting for the future, and so set an example of self-denial to the rest?”

Ulleem murmured in reply, “You shall never find me an undutiful son. I know you speak for my good, and you shall be obeyed.”

“God bless you, my dear boy; you have earned a father’s gratitude.”

After a moment’s thought, he added: “Leave me now, and send your elder brother to me, if he is at home.”

Ulleem, whose penetration was beyond his years, at once asked his father if it was his intention to speak to him on the subject they had just discussed; because,

if so, he would advise his father to avoid oral communication for the present.

“You may be right,” said his father; “but I have made up my mind to speak to him at once.”

CHAPTER VII.

NUSSOOH SENDS FOR HIS ELDEST SON,
KULLEEM.

•
ULLEEM found his brother in the men's apartments, and delivered his father's message.

The character of the eldest scion of the house, by name Kulleem, will have already dawned upon the reader. Among other peculiarities he was fond of reading and writing poetry, and had a quotation ready for every emergency. When Ulleem told him his father wished to see him, he remarked with a sneer :

“We seem to be highly favoured just now, as Sulleem will tell you. Sulleem ! come here.”

The boy had just peeped in, and, seeing his eldest brother, had drawn back. However, hearing him call, and taking courage from the presence of his other brother, he came into the room, and, anticipating the question he was sure to be asked, explained that he had had his hair cut off with his father's permission.

"So much for paternal affection," observed his brother.
"I'll be bound you are sorry for it now."

"I wanted it done before, but you would not let me,"
boldly replied Sulleem.

"Ah! I remember; those *four elements* of deceit,
as I call them, had persuaded you."

"You have no right to abuse my friends;—father
said so."

"Before or after he was ill?" asked Kulleem.

"This very day," was the answer.

"Don't you see, boy, that he is off his head? I said
from the first that the doctor's physic had affected his
brain."

"Nonsense!" interposed the second brother. "He
has just been talking with me for two hours, and he is
as sane as ever—saner I may say."

Ignoring this remark, Kulleem went on: "I hear he
is always praying now-a-days."

"Is that your definition of insanity?" returned
Ulleem with indignation.

"Anyone can see that he is crazed. When he got
well, he ought to have given an entertainment. Instead
of that he is always in the mosque praying with saints
of all sorts from the bazar. I am absolutely ashamed
to see him, and have left off going in that direction.
And the mean, peddling wretches he consorts with, if
you meet them in the street, are too proud to bend their
heads, or even raise the hand. They fling their salaam

at you from a distance, or want to shake hands,—‘*Long hands and short sleeves*,’ as the saying is. Sulleem, were you told to pray as well as shave?”

“Yes! and to give up cards, and lies, and bad company,” innocently replied the boy.

“You might as well be told to die at once: ‘*Life means heart-alive*,’ as they say.”

On this Ulleem burst out laughing, and said: “I don’t see much *heart-alive* in our amusements, I confess; and as to our friendships, they end in quarrelling and abuse. Tell me any two of your friends who do not quarrel.”

“Anyhow, they are better than these fellows from the bazar, who think themselves gentlemen because they say their prayers,” retorted Kulleem. “The poet says, ‘*Avoid those whose respectability consists in their religion*.’”

“I should say, avoid those whose respectability consists in their bad manners,” rejoined Ulleem, with a keen remembrance of his own treatment.

Rather taken aback by this home-thrust, Kulleem took refuge in a sneer: “Bravo! it is easy to see *you* are ready to turn saint’s disciple.”

“Ready!” cried Ulleem. “I have just performed the operation!”

Then Kulleem turned to his youngest brother, and said, “Sulleem, what do *you* say?”

“I was before my brother,” proudly said Sulleem; “for I had my head shaved early this morning.”

"Having your head shaved is no certificate, you little fool. Yours is a case of *ex necessitate rei*, as they say; and as for Ulleem, when my father converted him, he thought he had converted a pretty bit of infidelity. Well, all I can say is, I am out of it."

"Till you have gone to father and joined our circle," put in Ulleem.

"Enough, my good fellow," replied Kulleem. "Put that idea out of your head; as someone says: '*Mine is not an intoxication which can be cured by acid.*'"

"If you will only go and see my father, he will explain matters," said Ulleem.

"Will he? Suppose I don't want to have them explained? As they say: '*What has an unprincipled tyrant to do with explaining?*'"

"How do you know what he wants to say?" urged his brother.

"'*The fiddle plays and you know the tune,*'" quoted Kulleem.

"No good will come of this obstinacy, and father will be greatly vexed," said Ulleem.

Kulleem had another bit of Persian ready: "'*I can't help it if another is vexed without cause*'"; and he added, "My father has no business to interfere with me. I have cut my horns and done with calf-hood. It is all very well for you, and Sulleem, and Humeedah; but I won't go to school, and be told to do this and that."

"No one wants you to go to school," replied Ulleem.
 "Why can't you go and have a talk with father?"

"*'Everyone knows what is best for himself,'*" quoted Kulleem. "Besides, I don't want to be dragged into an endless discussion."

"No discussion is endless where bigotry, prejudice, and pedantry are avoided," said his brother.

"My father has at present only one idea in his head—prayer and fasting. After a time we shall see, he will come round."

"No," gravely replied Ulleem. "You are older than I, and perhaps know better; but my father is terribly in earnest, and, so far as I can judge, except yourself, we shall all be with him. It is your own doing, if you prefer to keep to your dirty clothes."

Staggered by the tone of a brother who had hitherto tamely submitted to his dictation, Kulleem muttered that he would have a word or two with his mother, and soon see what this nonsense meant, when Sulleem remarked:

"Mother is very much annoyed just now."

"What about?" eagerly inquired his eldest brother.

"Don't you know," replied Sulleem, proud of his information, "that she has had a tremendous quarrel this morning with our eldest sister, because she struck Humeedah when she was saying her prayers? She slapped her face for her, I can tell you."

"Is this true?" said Kulleem, in amazement.

"You can see for yourself, if you like; she is in a room by herself, and has eaten nothing all day."

"The whole family is going mad!" exclaimed Kulleem. "The *jehad* has begun with a vengeance! Humeedah saying her prayers! Naeemah struck by her mother!"

"I don't see anything wonderful in Humeedah saying her prayers," remarked Ulleem; "she is old enough to understand."

"Bah! she ought to be at her dolls and games. Beat her with a stick, and she would say she understood logic and philosophy."

"But she hasn't been beaten," quietly returned his brother.

"But Naeemah has been beaten," stormed the angry senior. "Whose honour is safe now? The eldest daughter! Married and a mother! Piety and gentility indeed! '*Nor fit for the Kaaba nor the idol temple!*' Good-bye to such a creed! And after this you advise me to go to my father. If he were to show me similar kindness, as someone says, '*I'm not the one to shirk the combat.*' Naeemah will starve rather than give in. '*Here to-day and gone to-morrow*' is the poor girl's case."

Ulleem merely replied: "I prefer to wait for my mother's account, before I say whether she was right or wrong."

"If it had happened to yourself you would not have

thought much about right or wrong. '*He knows to whom it happens,*' as they say."

"Anyhow, I see no great dishonour in being corrected by a parent," rejoined his brother.

"According to your pious notions," angrily replied Kulleem, "parents may treat their children as they please."

"I don't give a general opinion," said Ulleem. "All I say is, that, in this particular instance, mother may have good reason for what she did. You know how fond she is of her eldest daughter, and, to adopt your own style of argument, as they say, '*He who is always kind may be excused a single act of harshness.*'"

Kulleem would have capped this by another quotation, when a maid entered, and said to Ulleem:

"The master would be glad of an answer to his message."

"Say he is just coming," replied Ulleem: and, turning to his elder brother, he implored him to go at once.

Kulleem began arguing again, and eventually refused to go, or even to send a message to his father.

Ulleem was in despair. Though he had told his father that an interview with his eldest brother would be best deferred for the present, he had honestly tried to carry out his father's wishes; and he now saw that Kulleem's obstinate refusal would only widen the breach between them. He determined to consult his mother. She,

poor soul, was in great distress. She had been able to do nothing with the baby. She hadn't taken a morsel of food, and had spent her time at the door of the room in which her daughter was, peeping through the cracks and listening to her moans. As yet no one dared enter the room. Her old nurse, Bedārā, had indeed ventured to take the baby to its mother, but had been savagely ejected, baby and all; and then, to crown all, Salihah had sent to say she was engaged just now, but would come the first thing in the morning. And now that Ulleem brought the news of his eldest brother's disobedience, she had hardly strength to encounter the task of remonstrating with him. She then proceeded to tell her second son the events of the morning, and asked him if he thought she was justified in correcting his sister as she had.

Ulleem replied: "When I first heard of this just now, I said you probably had good reason for what you did; and now that I know the facts I am certain you did right. Let me go and speak to my sister."

"No, my boy," replied Fahmeedah; "your self-respect will only be injured. I have sent for Salihah, and we must await her arrival. Unfortunately, I did not tell her what had happened."

Ulleem at once offered to fetch his cousin; and while he was away Fahmeedah, having secured the necessary privacy, went to the men's apartments. She found her

son with a pack of cards in his hands, and could not help exclaiming :

“ I wish the cards were burned ! you can’t live without them.”

He had a quotation ready :

“ ‘ *Don’t be idle, but do something,* ’ is what you mean.”

“ I mean,” said his mother, “ that if you want something to do, obey your father’s summons. At least hear what he has to say.”

“ I know it already,” he replied.

“ You know you are doing wrong in thus disobeying your father.”

“ ‘ *Wrong comes from wrong, and bad from bad,* ’ as they say,” sneered Kulleem by way of answer, and to aggravate his mother.

“ Keep your riddles to yourself,” said the angry Fahmeedah. “ I don’t want to hear your nonsense.”

“ Naeemah at least understands such riddles,” he retorted bitterly.

“ God forgive her for a perverted understanding, and you too ! I ask you, Kulleem, why will you not go to your father ? ”

“ They tell me,” replied he, “ that he insists on our saying prayers and giving up all our amusements.”

“ Is not prayer the command of God ? ” asked his mother.

“ I do not say it is not. I merely decline to comply

with my father's command. Why should new customs be introduced into the family? God is the same as he was before, and we too. I wish to be let alone. If anyone wants to be a saint, I don't interfere."

"But is it not the duty of parents to interfere for the good of their children, when the necessity arises?" urged Fahmeedah.

"Was it my father's duty before the cholera? Or has he had a special revelation since? If it is not a revelation, it must be the effect of his illness," sarcastically observed Kulleem.

"You have insinuated that he is deranged, before now. Go to him yourself, and you will see. Madmen don't usually concern themselves about the future."

For once he was not ready with an answer. He changed his ground, and exclaimed:

"Am I Sulleem, to be tutored and disciplined in this way? The advice of one's parents is all very well up to the age of ten; after that, children can think for themselves. It is too late for me to change now; if you wanted me to be a priest, you should have brought me up accordingly. I might have been to Mecca and back, or have taken a contract for the alms-tax, or have become renowned as a reader of the Koran. As it is, if I compare myself with other gentlemen's sons, I am as good as most of them, if not the best. In poetical competitions my odes always stand first; in chess I can hold my own with the best players; and in cards

I can make as much of a bad hand as most people. My pigeons are the best in the city. As for kite-flying, I can cut the strings of the largest kites with a *dhelchi*.* In Zauk's words, '*What is there that I cannot do?*' My father has seen my odes, and knows their excellence. Yesterday it was 'Bravo ! bravo !' To-day I am so ignorant that I must go to school. 'Say your prayers, don't associate with your friends, don't play cards,' is the order now. '*Gambler turned pilgrim*,' with a vengeance !"

His mother replied : "Kulleem, your father knows all this, and knows, too, how difficult it will be to persuade such a one as you to give up his bad habits. He blames himself and not his children ; but it is none the less his duty to try and bring them into the right path, and clear himself from reproach in the future."

"I say again, let him do his duty by the younger ones, and leave me alone," doggedly replied her son.

"And have you reflected what is to be the end of all this ?" inquired his mother.

"Oh ! I daresay he'll be angry enough, but I shall keep out of the way, and you'll soon persuade him to come round."

"You are wrong in your calculations. If I thought this was to be the end of it, I wouldn't have troubled

* This is the cheapest and smallest kind of kite, in the shape of a square. The skill of the kite-flyer is shown in drawing the string of his own kite across that of his rival's so as to cut it through.

myself to speak to you at all. Your father is in earnest ; and I, for one, shall not oppose his wishes."

"Yes, you are all afraid of him," said Kulleem with a sneer. "A fig for such piety, say I, which is won by loaves and fishes. I swear I would have left home long ago, had I known things would come to this."

"Oh ! Kulleem, you don't mean to leave home !"

"What is there to prevent me ?" he asked. "As they say, '*My legs itch to start.*'"

"Won't you listen to your mother ? Surely a mother's love claims some consideration."

So saying, Fahmeedah broke down in a burst of tears.

Soon after a letter was handed to Kulleem. She saw it was from her husband, and asked Kulleem what it contained.

He handed her the letter, which was as follows :

"My dear son, may God direct you. I have twice sent for you, but you have neither come nor sent an apology ; and though nothing can excuse the disobedience of a son, yet surely some explanation was demanded by the usages of polite society. Allegiance is due, under God, to the head of the family from his dependents, as to a king ; and, though I confess with shame that I have been a weak and faithless ruler hitherto, the time has come for me to exert my authority in removing the abuses which I have allowed to creep into my jurisdiction. I wished to speak to you on this subject, and hoped to have your co-operation as my eldest son. We have

passed our lives so far in neglect of the plain commands of God, and reflection will convince you that my anxiety is not unreasonable. I have been close to death, and have realised the fact that sooner or later I must give account to God not only for myself but for my family.

“I am aware that young men like you have their doubts in religious matters, and this is not a crime, for doubt suggests inquiry, and brings assurance in the end. Had you come to me, perhaps I might have helped you. Your desertion has thrown me on my own resources, for I know too well the effect of your example on the rest; but, please God, I shall persevere in the course I have marked out. I can only add that if you determine to refuse compliance with my wishes, I, for my part, shall be content to sever the ties which now connect us. Adieu.”

Fahmeedah returned the letter to her son with the inquiry, “Kulleem, do you now think that your father is deranged?”

“Think!” replied he. “I am certain of it.” As someone says, *‘If he is not mad, he certainly is not sane.’* If to think himself a king is not madness, I don’t know what is. Even *he* knows now that I do not intend to go to him.”

“Alas! for your bad fate!” said his mother with a sigh.

“*‘Bad it may be, but bad is the best,’*” quoted her incorrigible son.

His mother entreated him to read his father's letter carefully once more ; but she had hardly finished speaking when Salihah's *dooli* was announced, and she hurried to the zenana to receive her niece.

CHAPTER VIII.

NAEEMAH AND SALIHAH.

“AND what is it all about?” said Salihah when her aunt came to her in the zenana. “Ulleem tells me there has been a quarrel, and says I must learn the rest from you.”

Her aunt replied by telling her the whole story.

Salihah saw that she had a difficult task before her, and said cheerfully that she thought she could persuade her cousin to be reasonable, but that everyone must be kept out of the way during the interview, lest Naeemah’s pride should again take fire. Her aunt knew as well as she did that wrong-doers are apt to detest the witnesses of their misconduct, and at once followed out the suggestion by ordering everybody out of that part of the house.

Salihah then passed quickly into the passages, calling “Naeemah ! Naeemah !” as if she had just arrived, and wanted to see her cousin as usual. First she went

towards the kitchen and searched the apartments on that side, and finally approached the room where she knew her cousin was. Naeemah had been lying on the floor all day; but directly she heard Salihah's voice, never imagining that she had been sent for, she hurried on to the bed, and, covering herself up, pretended to be asleep.

Salihah still feigned ignorance, and, coming up to the bed, exclaimed:

"Why, who is this?—I declare it's Naeemah! How do you do, dear? you have been asleep."

Naeemah burst into tears at her cousin's kindly greeting.

"Does your head ache, dear? What is the matter? Is baby not well? Has a message come from your husband's family?" embracing and comforting her as she talked on.

At last Naeemah managed to sob out: "Don't you know what has happened?"

Salihah replied: "I have only just come in. All I heard was that Kulleem had quarrelled with my uncle, and threatens to leave the house."

"Kulleem going to leave the house!" ejaculated Naeemah, now thoroughly aroused.

"They say," continued Salihah, "that my uncle insisted on his saying his prayers, and that if he refuses he will have nothing more to do with him."

"Confound these prayers!" burst out Naeemah.

"Nobody will be able to stay in the house except Humeedah. Remain here a day or two, and you will see for yourself what we have come to! All sociability and friendliness are at an end. The zenana used to be alive with our acquaintances. Ajubah used to amuse us with gossip and stories every day. Not a soul comes near us now."

"I wonder what is the reason of this?" innocently asked Salihah.

"When my father recovered from his illness," continued her cousin, "instead of inviting his friends and neighbours to a festival, he resorted to the mosque, and now spends all his time on the prayer-carpet. And Humeedah abets him; I should like to thrash the little wretch!"

"Poor little Humeedah!" exclaimed Salihah. "She loves you far more than most sisters love each other. I have seen her refuse her breakfast because you had no appetite. She nurses baby for you all day, and he is quiet with no one else. She is a darling child, and I love her dearly."

"Yes, everybody sings Humeedah's praises; I can only say I detest her. Till to-day my mother never used a cross word to me, and this morning she struck me, and all on account of Humeedah."

"So my aunt struck you, did she?"

"I gave Humeedah my baby to hold, and she flopped him down on the ground to catch his death of cold. I

gave her a push, and bang she fell upon a nail or something and got scratched a little."

"I don't believe Humeedah would put down the baby any more than my aunt strike you, without cause. I must go and ask her about it," returned Salihah.

But this was not to Naeemah's mind, and she cried: "Stay here: I'll tell you how it was. She put baby down because she had forgotten her prayers, and mother struck me because I spoke ill of praying."

"No one who believes in God," gravely said Salihah, "would speak ill of praying. Your mother was right to be angry."

"I did not say it intentionally; it slipped out."

"If a disrespectful expression had slipped out, as you say, about your father or brother, would they not have been angry? Are you not afraid of God's anger?" said her cousin.

Naeemah said she was sorry, and presently asked: "But what is the use of women praying? They have their family duties and their children to attend to."

Salihah replied: "In my opinion there is more reason for women to worship God than for men. In the first place they have more time, and, in the second place, they have a larger share of the good things of life. We have ten times as much clothing and jewellery, for instance. *You might bury a woman in a gold mine, and she would never have enough gold.*"

"It is a pity you were not my mother's daughter,"

laughed Naeemah ; “ you would then have had plenty of the good things you speak of.”

“ If the result of having good things is to forget God, I desire none of them,” rejoined Salihah. “ I am content to be as I am ; and do not care for a few hours of pleasure at the expense of eternal misery.”

“ *The grapes are sour !* ” observed her cousin.

“ That is as you take it. You think I am unhappy ; but where is your own happiness ? Happiness consists in affection and love. You have quarrelled with your mother, you hate Humeedah, you are separated from your husband. Do you call it happiness to lie weeping here all day by yourself ? ”

“ Good God ! ” exclaimed Naeemah, “ from the way you talk, one would think you were not a human being ! Did you ever hear of a family without quarrels ? *If you put dishes together, they will rattle.* ”

“ Well, then, why do you make such a fuss about a quarrel now ? ” was the adroit reply.

“ What fuss do I make ? ” blustered Naeemah. “ What should you say, if your mother was to beat you ? ”

“ She is welcome to beat me ; but then I take care to say nothing to displease her.”

“ I didn’t think my mother would be displeased,” said Naeemah ; “ she never thought about prayer before. However, I shouldn’t have minded so much if she had corrected me in private.”

"You forgot your duties to your mother, dear sister," said her cousin gently.

"Salihah," said she, after an interval, "did my mother send you to talk me over?"

"No," said her cousin; "the fault is yours, not hers."

Naeemah, relenting: "I want to go to her, but I am ashamed. Won't to-morrow do?"

"To-morrow!" said Salihah. "Have you no fear of God, that you would keep everyone starving till to-morrow!"

"Let me off joining my hands and I will do everything. You may get some food for me, and bring baby."

"What do I care, whether you eat or not?" said Salihah. "You must beg your mother's pardon."

"Please don't tease me any more. I have given in to oblige you. I will take food, if you will bring it; and when I have to join hands I will do it, and not till then."

Salihah said no more. She had gained her point, and went straight to her aunt, and asked her to send some food at once to Naeemah's room for her cousin and herself.

Fahmeedah could hardly believe her ears. She had been listening at the door part of the time, and had gone away in sorrow and despair at the things she heard her daughter say, and now in astonishment she asked her niece how she had exorcised the demon.

Before midnight all the family had taken food, and had gone to rest, except Naeemah and Salihah, who sat up talking.

Naeemah said : " Well, my dear, are you happy now ? I have done all you wished."

Said Salihah : " I shall be happy when you are reconciled to your mother."

" What remains now ? In ten days or so we shall speak to each other again."

" Ten days ! why, you said to-morrow yourself just now ! I had hoped you would have cleared up the balance in the morning."

" The truth is," said Naeemah, " I don't see how I can go on living in this house. I told you the fashion of our life is changed. My eldest brother's time has come, and it is my turn next. But he is a man, and won't want friends ; his poetry will secure him a place anywhere. I have no accomplishments, and could not earn a pice. I am *like a street cur who eats what is thrown to him*. Our father never speaks to us ; and if my mother turns against me, what can I do ? "

" Why are you so disheartened ? " asked her cousin. " Is religion such a burden, that all these troubles should come of it ? "

" I am a laughter-loving person. I can't stand this gloom and austerity. The quarrel has come to-day, but I have long foreseen it."

" What, then, do you think of doing ? " asked Salihah

"I thought of coming to live with you," replied her cousin.

Salihah was silent.

"Oh!" sighed Naeemah, "the very idea takes away your breath. Never mind, I only said it to test your affection. I don't want to be under an obligation."

"What obligation? You are as much my mother's child as I am. Your aunt will be your host, not I. If you quarrel with your own mother, it does not follow that all the family will be your enemies."

"But aunt is not well off," said Naeemah. "If I go, how can she keep me?"

"She is not so poor but that she can afford to have you for a time," replied her cousin.

"My idea was to remain with you some little time, till these troubles have blown over, and then, if my mother sends for me, I can return home," suggested Naeemah.

Salihah assented, but said that she must ask her mother's leave before she left home, and made her promise not to go away without seeing her. Naeemah, full of the idea of getting away, was only too glad to promise anything, and even begged that the *doolies* might be ordered at once so as to be ready the first thing in the morning. She said she wanted to get away before it was light, as the baby was frightened in a *dooli*.

After this had been done, they went to sleep.

The stars were still shining when Salihah rose, according to custom, to perform her morning devotions. Her aunt was up for the same purpose, and she joined her. Later on Salihah told her aunt what had passed, and said that Naeemah wished to accompany her home. Fahmeedah, finding that it was Naeemah's own suggestion, raised no difficulty about her going for a week or so, and took it for granted, as did her niece, that she would see Naeemah to say good-bye. The *doolies* had come, and Salihah went to awake her cousin: but what was her astonishment to find that Naeemah, taking her baby with her, had already started? Unwilling to face her mother, or too proud to ask her forgiveness, she had slipped out unseen, while her cousin was engaged.

Fahmeedah was bitterly disappointed, but the *dooli* could not be recalled; and Salihah, bidding her aunt take heart, for all would eventually be right, started after her cousin.

CHAPTER IX.

NUSSOOH BURNS THE BOOKS AND PROPERTY OF
HIS ELDEST SON.

KULLEEM had disappeared, without a word to anyone, in the confusion of his cousin Salihah's arrival. When his mother returned to continue her conversation with him she noticed the house-door open, and, not finding him in the room, supposed he had gone out, but never suspected that he had gone for good.

Nussooh had passed the night in a tumult of conflicting emotions at his son's defiance of his authority, but, angry as he was, he resolved to make one more effort to win his confidence. He had met the *doolies* in the lane on his way back from early prayer at the mosque, and, when he reached home, he went into the men's apartments and inquired for Kulleem. None of the servants had seen him, and, aware of his son's lazy habits, he sat down to wait. To a man of his

character, waiting is intolerable. When his patience was exhausted, he summoned the domestics and charged them with being in league with their young master to keep him out of his father's way. In fact, he went so far as to threaten them with dismissal. They protested they had not been in the house all night; for their mistress had sent them home, and they had only just returned.

Hardly knowing what to believe, Nussooh went to his wife's sitting-room, where he was accustomed to receive the morning salutations of his family, and presently took an opportunity of asking his wife if Salihah had gone.

Fahmeedah told him all that had occurred, of Salihah's successful persuasion, the midnight repast, and Naeemah's sudden departure. All he said was that he thanked God they were rid of her.

When he proceeded to inquire for Kulleem, she was much perturbed, for her husband had evidently been looking for him, and replied: "I was sitting with him when your letter came, and I saw him read it; but just then Salihah arrived, and I was too much occupied to go back to him. However, when we all went to bed, I looked into the room again, and he was not there."

Nussooh at once realised the fact that his son had deserted the house, perhaps for good; and his first feeling, as in the case of Naeemah, was a sensation of relief, that one more weed was rooted out; but that his

feelings as a father were deeply moved appeared from his next words: "I ask you if it is my fault that he thus abandoned us."

Fahmeedah's patience had been much tried by her son's unkind words and heartlessness, and she said: "No; you have done your best, and have only treated him too kindly. Ulleem could do nothing with him, and I wearied myself with arguing with him. He did nothing but quote poetry, and would not even wait to finish the conversation. Well! each has his own destiny."

"Alas! that his perversity prevented his coming to me. I would have listened to him, and explained my motives and intentions," dejectedly replied Nussooh.

"Ulleem," he continued after an interval, "did you look among his things to see if there was a letter, or anything to explain the reasons of his departure?"

"I did not think of that," said Ulleem; "but I hardly fancy he could have written, for he must have gone away immediately after he received your letter. I will go and look."

His father accompanied him, curious to inspect his eldest son's surroundings.

Kulleem occupied two rooms, one of which the servants explained was his "Palace of Delight," and the other his "Place of Retirement." They went into the former first. The room was elegantly and luxuriously furnished. There was a carpet, and a creaseless

drugget of white cloth stretched over it; and a dais, with a costly rug and pillows, and a *hookah* and spitting-vases, conveniently placed. The chairs were of polished wood; and a *punkha*, with fringes of gold and silver lace, was suspended above. Chandeliers and globes of coloured glass hung from the ceiling, in imitation, as it were, of the orbs of heaven. The walls were adorned with pictures and verses from the poets, framed and glazed.

Nussooh gazed at this scene with astonishment, as a person in a trance, and sighed to think of his son's extravagance. His attention was next drawn to a couple of tables, on which were placed cards and dice, musical boxes and flower-jars, *itr* and *pan*;* and among other things there was a large handsomely bound volume, which Nussooh at once examined. It was an album containing portraits of the celebrities of his son's familiar world, singers and dancers, wrestlers and eunuchs, jesters and gamblers. He then looked at the pictures and verses on the walls, and found them little else but illustrations of vice and irreligion. He seized a carpet-weight in his indignation, and smashed them all to pieces, and, hurrying out the contents of the room *en masse*, had them burned in the court-yard.

The "Place of Retirement" was next examined. This was furnished in the same luxurious style; but what attracted Nussooh's immediate attention was a

* Otto of roses and betel, always offered to a visitor on his departure.

cabinet of books. There was a large collection of volumes ; but whether Persian or Urdu, all were of the same kind, equally indecent and irreligious. Looking to the beauty of the binding, the excellence of the lithography, the fineness of the paper, the elegance of the style, and the propriety of the diction, Kulleem's books made a valuable library, but their contents were mischievous and degrading; and after Nussooh had examined them one by one, he resolved to commit them also to the flames. Fired with enthusiasm at these proceedings, Ulleem ran for his copies of *Atish* and *Sharar*,* and, though his father said he might keep them if he pleased, he cried "Bismillah!" and flung them into the burning heap with the remark that they were now *Atish* and *Sharar* indeed. The boy remembered his brother's treatment of the Missionary's gift, and thought the destruction of his library was a righteous retribution.

Nor was little Sulleem behindhand. He, too, brought a book to his father, and told the story of his possession of it as follows :

"One day a pedlar brought some books for sale, and my eldest brother purchased a great many, including the *Fisānah Ajāib*, *Gul Bakāoli*, *Arāish Mahfil*, *Masnavi Mir Hasan*, *The Jokes of Niāmat Khān Ali*, *Chirkīn's Odes*, *The Satires of Sauda*, *The Diwān of Jān Sāhib*, *The Bahārdānish*, &c., and,

* These are the poetical titles (*takhallus*) of two modern poets. The literal meaning of the words is "fire" and "sparks."

seeing me standing by, said he would buy a book for me too. He chose out two, this *Wāsokht*,* and a *Diwān* by *Nazir of Agra*, and recommended me to take the latter, as a really valuable work. When I looked at it, the first thing I saw was the piece called "Pickled Rats," and I would have nothing more to say to such stuff, and so he made me take the *Wāsokht* instead. Some time after Huzrat Bee's eldest grandson saw it in my wallet, and took me to task for having bad books in my possession. Since then I have put it aside, and have never looked at it."

It need hardly be said the *Wāsokht* was soon added to the bonfire.

The inspection of Kulleem's rooms revealed much to his father which his own selfish and secluded life had hitherto prevented him from knowing; and he understood now the character of his spendthrift son far more fully than if he had accepted the opportunity of a personal interview to express his objections to a religious life.

When Fahmeedah, ignorant of what had been going on, asked him if he had found a letter, he told her what was passing in his mind, and inquired if she had ever seen the "Palace of Delight" and the "Place of Retirement." She had no conception of his meaning, and, when her husband explained the terms, said she

* Anacreontic stanzas. A *diwān* is a collection of poems of which the rhymes end with the several letters of the alphabet in turn.

had never been in the men's apartments till last night at Ulleem's request. He satisfied her curiosity as to the contents of the rooms by telling her, in the words of Maulana Rūm, that they were as *foul as an infidel's tomb* ; but when he added that he had made a bonfire of the books and appurtenances, the common superstition of the ignorant about the sanctity of books asserted itself, and she said :

"Why did you burn them? People pick up even bits of paper with respect, and if they chance to stumble over a book they say 'God forbid,' and kiss it and raise it to their foreheads."

"That is only a foolish superstition," said her husband ; "but all books whose contents are good are worthy of respect."

"Do books, then, contain bad things?" she asked in naïve astonishment.

"The books I found in Kulleem's room were full of infidelity and depravity. The publication of such books spreads wickedness on all sides. The art of poetry, for instance, as practised now, is mischievous beyond measure," observed Nussooh.

"I have seen poetry," she said, "but never saw anything wrong in it. Kulleem gets much praise for his compositions."

"Poetry is not bad in itself," rejoined he ; "but now-a-days people use it for immoral purposes, or for satire, which is another name for slander, or for

fulsome flattery, which is falsehood, or for lampooning religious men and precepts, which is contrary to the laws of Islam."

"Well," she cried, "this is the first time I have heard that wickedness can be increased by education."

"Do you remember reading the *Gulistan* with me?" asked her husband.

"Yes, of course; it was soon after Humeedah was weaned."

"Do you remember, too, that before your lesson I used to ink over sentences here and there, and paste paper over whole pages? Well, all I can say is that what I cut out was unfit for you to read."

She said she supposed he had cut it out because it was too difficult.

Her husband proceeded: "And this is a book which is supposed to be moral and didactic! The work of a man whom few Mahomedans mention without using a title of reverence, as if he were a saint of God!"

The burning of the books, however, still weighed on Fahmeedah's mind; and she told her husband he might have left them where they were, or have sold them.

Nussooh rejoined: "I think it was last hot weather that a snake came out of one of the drains. What a fright you were all in, and how earnestly you begged it might be caught or killed! You never asked me to

leave it where it was, or send for a snake-charmer to buy it for a few pice! Yet these books are more poisonous than the snake, and to sell them would be as bad as to receive stolen goods."

CHAPTER X.

WHAT BEFELL KULLEEM.

KULLEEM, as we know, slipped out unperceived when his cousin Salihah arrived. He little thought he was leaving his home for ever. It was no new thing to him to run away from home; for, as a child, whenever anything was demanded of him which he did not like, he would run away to the bazar with all the servants in pursuit, or his mother would have to fetch him back in her *dooli*. Even now the fancy came to him that he might be followed, and he could hardly avoid looking back to listen; for with all his obstinacy he was a child in some things still. He was so vain of his reputation as a poet, that he was always expecting that some good appointment would be offered him by the Government; and as for the native states, he believed that the Chief of any one of them would receive him with open arms, and make him Prime Minister on the spot. A big elephant and a golden *howdah* were ready for him when-

ever he chose to go. With these foolish ideas in his head, *the ladder of pride in full view before him*, he directed his steps to the house of one Mirza Zahirdar Beg, as a loose horse gallops to his stable, and knocked at the door of what he believed to be the Mirza's home.

This fellow's grandfather, as he was supposed to be, had been orderly Jemadar to the English Resident at the time of the occupation ; and the advantages of his position, and the circumstances of the times were such, that he made a fortune, and gradually acquired rank as one of the principal citizens of Dehli. During his life-time the Mirza's widowed mother and her son lived in his house, and were kindly treated ; but when he died, his sons and grandsons repudiated the connection, and even attempted to withhold the pension of seven rupees a month which he had assigned by will for their support. This pittance, which was derived from the rent of shops in the bazar, was all the Mirza had for the support of himself, his mother, and his wife. He assumed the *rôle* of an injured man, and, much to their disgust, thrust his company on the late Jemadar's heirs, as their relation and equal, and aped their habits and style of life. By some means or other he contrived to dress in the height of fashion—embroidered shoes, a double-bordered turban, a flowered Dacca muslin tunic, with a vest of some delicate material, and long-cloth in the cold weather, at seven rupees a yard. In the afternoon

his costume was velvet or silk threaded with gold and silver tissue, a scarlet waist-band, long-flowing pantaloons or skin-close drawers, and withal a bunch of keys, for which there were no locks, dangling from his belt.

Kulleem had made his acquaintance at one of the poetical competitions, and, being no judge of character, and easily imposed on by appearances, had formed a close intimacy with him, and thought him the finest fellow in the world. In fact, the Mirza was installed as a constant *habitué* of the "Palace of Delight."

We left Kulleem knocking at the door. After a long delay two maids appeared, and asked who it was, and what he wanted at that hour of the night?

"I want the Mirza Sahib," angrily replied Kulleem.

"What Mirza?" they said.

"Mirza Zahirdar Beg, the owner of the house!" cried Kulleem.

"There is no such person here," they said, and were about to shut the door in his face, when he exclaimed:

"Is not this the Jemadar Sahib's house? And is not Mirza Zahirdar Beg his heir and successor?"

Hearing this, the idea struck them that perhaps he meant Mirza the fop, who was always calling himself the Jemadar's heir, and they said:

"The person you want lives in a mud hut at the back of the house near that stack of fuel"; and so saying, they closed the door.

Kulleem, rather taken aback by this discovery of his friend's false pretensions, found out the house and called the Mirza up, and asked for a lodging for the night.

"All right," said the Mirza; "come into the Mosque here. I'll be with you in a minute."

The Mosque turned out to be a deserted building, swarming with bats and paved with filth. Kulleem waited impatiently for his friend's return; and the latter, after a long delay, came to say that his wife was suddenly taken ill, and that he was obliged to attend to her. But he was curious to ascertain the reason of Kulleem's visit, and asked why he had thus honoured him.

Kulleem told him the whole story, and asked his advice, offering to do anything but return home.

"What is right at night may be wrong in the morning," sententiously observed the Mirza. "I will send over some bedding, and the best thing you can do is to make yourself comfortable here."

"Rather odd, isn't it," said Kulleem, "that you should have told me you had a grand mansion, halls of audience, private gardens, baths, and what not, when you haven't a room to put up a friend in for the night?"

"I am sorry," said the Mirza in return, "that you should have been in my company so long and have misunderstood me. The late Jemadar adopted me, and

I am his heir, as everybody knows ; but my title is disputed, and to avoid unpleasantness I have given way at present. My self-respect prevented me troubling you with this story. But you must be tired of standing. I'll go and send the bedding, and nurse my wife."

"Well, I suppose there is no help for it," said Kulleem. "But send me over a lamp, please, for the darkness here is awful."

"Ah! I had thought of that," said the other; "but you had better not have a lamp, for the moths will be attracted, and there are a lot of swallows in the roof who will tumble on you from their roost, if there is a light. The moon will be up soon."

Kulleem had been too anxious to get away to think of his dinner, and was now famished; and, as the Mirza's ideas of hospitality did not apparently include the offer of a meal, he was driven to confess his hunger.

"You don't mean to say you want anything to eat?" said his friend. "Unfortunately I have nothing in the house, and the shops are all shut by this time. Stay. I'll run over to the baker's, and get half-a-pice worth of parched gram for you."

And off he went. When he came back there was about a handful left, which he made over to Kulleem, and without giving him time to remonstrate at the meagreness of his repast, rattled on:

"Lucky to find an oven open at this time of night,

wasn't it? Eat away, my good fellow! See how beautifully it is parched, and how nice and sweet it smells! Did you ever see such delicious gram before? Ah! I can tell you a story about Gram. Once on a time Gram went to the Court of the Archangel Michael, who, as you know, presides over the fruits and crops, and complained as follows: 'What fault have I committed that, directly I show my head above the ground, I am ill-used? Cutting and mowing is the first thing, and after that men pluck my sprouts and eat them raw. When I grow a little bigger the goats browse off me. When this is over the season of pod-picking begins, and by the time I am mature my stems and leaves fill the bellies of hungry cattle. As for my ripe grains, they are crushed between mill-stones and given to horses to eat, or parched in the oven, or boiled, or made into soap. In short, I suffer cruelties innumerable.' The attendant angels were so displeased at Gram's tirade that they ran to eat him up, and Gram made himself scarce, without waiting for the Archangel's orders. Sorry there's no salt and pepper, or you would have a feast indeed!"

All the seasoning Kulleem got was his friend's ingenious chatter; and before he could say another word the latter disappeared. Presently a dirty old drugget and a pillow were brought over, and Kulleem prepared to pass the night as best he could. He composed an ode in ridicule of the Mosque, and a satire on the

Mirza. Towards dawn he went to sleep, and the Mirza, or some other rascal, walked off with his cap and shoes and the drugget and pillow ; and he woke in the forenoon to find himself minus everything but what he had got on, and plastered from head to foot with muck from the Mosque floor.

The Mirza was not to be seen, the Mosque was weird and desolate, and there was no water. Ashamed to be seen, he waited for someone to turn up who might call the Mirza. In the afternoon a boy came playing about the steps, and Kulleem jumped up to hail him ; but the boy thought it was a demon, and fled for his life. As soon as it was dusk he ventured out, and knocked at the Mirza's door, and was told he had gone off early to the Kootoob ; but he had no sooner asked the loan of a cap and shoes than a voice called out :

“Where are the drugget and pillow ? Zuburdust, catch the rascal !”

Kulleem took the hint and ran ; but Zuburdust Khan soon seized his prey, and forthwith dragged him off to the Kotwali as a common thief. At first he declined to give his name and address ; and when he did, the Kotwal flatly refused to believe him, for he was acquainted with Nussooh, and knew that he had a son of some repute in the city as a poet. Kulleem produced his recent compositions in the Mosque to prove he was a poet ; but his appearance was so much against him that the Kotwal was still incredulous, and, by way of

settling the matter, ordered two policemen to take him there and then to his father's house for identification, and, if his father acknowledged him, to let him go.

Kulleem's feelings may be better imagined than described. As it happened, Nussooh was in the Mosque of the Quarter in which his house was situated, conversing with his friends; and the policemen, recognizing him as they passed by, dragged their captive into the courtyard, and presented him to his father.

Nussooh's emotion at the sight of his son in this pitiable guise was a sufficient recognition of his parentage, and the policemen left him and went their way.

It was with a strange revulsion of feeling that Kulleem now found himself, as it were, arraigned before the father he had slighted and disobeyed, and in the presence of the very men whom he had so lately sneered at and reviled; but, when at length his unhappy and indignant father found words to remonstrate with him and to entreat him to return to his duty and allegiance to the Divine commands, all he said was, "Be good enough to let me send for my things." His father again implored him, in pity to his heart-broken mother, to return home. It was of no avail. With downcast eyes and dogged resolution Kulleem declared that he had purposely avoided an open rupture with his father; but, now that circumstances had brought them face to face, he told him once for all that he was unable to comply

with his wishes. He would leave Dehli, and make a name, as they should all hear in time.

Nussooh then rose with the intention of going home ; and Kulleem, supposing he would lay hands upon him and compel him to accompany him, took to his heels and was soon out of sight.

Meanwhile, the news of Kulleem's arrival had already reached the house. Fahmeedah, half distracted, regardless of *purdah*, rushed to meet her husband at the door, screaming "Where is my Kulleem?"

"Your Kulleem, indeed!" returned Nussooh. "If he had been your Kulleem, he would not have left his home and treated us all thus shamefully, notwithstanding our entreaties."

"For God's sake let me see my darling son! I heard he was bareheaded and barefooted! His tender feet will have been lacerated by the stones! Curse the police and the Kotwal! To think my boy capable of theft!"

"Go in and sit down," sternly replied her husband. "This senseless uncontrollable love of yours has caused all the mischief."

"Oh! tell me where he is gone," sobbed the wretched mother, as they led her into the house.

"How can I tell you?" said her husband. "He has gone without my leave, and has covered us with infamy. To think that I should see a son of mine, in such a guise, a prisoner in the hands of the police!"

“ Why did you not bring him home to his mother ? ”
she moaned.

“ Would you have had me fight and grapple with him
in the public streets ? ” asked Nussooh.

CHAPTER XI.

COUSIN FITRUT.

ALONE in the streets with his humiliation, Kulleem's first thought was to take refuge at his aunt's, and it would have been well if he had done so; but, alas! in this crisis of his career an evil genius, in the person of his kinsman Fitrut, presented itself. This gentleman was connected with Nussooh; but a family quarrel had embittered their relations, and he had secretly heard and laughed over his cousin's proceedings since his illness. "Nussooh," said he, "may order lacs of piety, but how about Kulleem?" When, therefore, he came upon Kulleem, bareheaded and shoeless, in the bazar, he saw at a glance what had occurred, and was more pleased than surprised.

"Hallo!" he cried, with an amused glance at the young man's disreputable figure, "are you going on pilgrimage?"

“Not on pilgrimage, but peregrinage,”* responded Kulleem, falling in with his humour.

“Ah! I said you were too clever a fellow to follow in the wake of the Sheikh of the period,” said Fitrut.

“No, indeed!” said Kulleem, pleased at the compliment. “You know what poets call a Sheikh.”†

“My good cousin Nussooh,” continued Fitrut, “treats his family, and yourself, its ornament, in a curious fashion. His temper has already alienated his relations. How his wife, poor thing, can put up with it, I can’t imagine. I assure you we are extremely sorry for you; but what can we do? May I ask where you are going?”

“I thought of going to my aunt’s,” replied Kulleem.

“But perhaps His Excellency has warned her against you already,” suggested the other. “How do you know she will receive you? You will hardly be wise to go there in this plight, and at such an hour. Come and sleep at my house, and you can go there in the morning. Here, wrap this shawl over your head, and we can turn down this lane.”

Kulleem was nothing loth, for he had hitherto found all against him; and now that Fitrut told him his father was an unreasonable tyrant and himself an injured man, he thought him his best friend and counsellor. He had,

* I coin a word to preserve the *annominatio*.

† There is a play on the words here which is untranslatable. In fact, the son makes a pun on his father’s name.

to choose between two paths—the straight and narrow path of religion, with the inconveniences of fasting and holiness, humility, and a fear of the future, recommended by his father, and Fitrut's highway, a continuous bazar, thronged and gay, and offering the delights of ease and freedom from control. It is hardly necessary to say that he preferred the latter; and Fitrut, who knew that nothing would annoy his cousin more than to hear that Kulleem had taken refuge with himself, was well pleased to secure him.

Kulleem set to work on a *Masnavi** descriptive of his family history, and, finding the want of his library impeded his progress, consulted Fitrut as to the best means of getting hold of his books. Fitrut declared that his father would never let him have the books if he could help it; but that he had no doubt of his own ability to steal his cousin's bed from under him while he was asleep, if necessary; and he undertook to go to the house and reconnoitre. When he returned with the news that his father had burned all Kulleem's books the day after he left the house, Kulleem's wrath knew no bounds, and his one idea was revenge; and the wily Fitrut took care to keep the flame alive. Various schemes of vengeance were propounded. Nothing was too villainous for Fitrut; and one day he said: "The village which your father bought is registered in your name, is it not? Why shouldn't you take possession?"

* A poem which consists of rhyming distichs.

“ My father’s agents and servants are in possession already,” replied Kulleem, “ and I am only the nominal owner.”

“ Who is to prove that ? ” rejoined the other. “ The receipt for the purchase money is in *your* name ; the transaction is entered in the village accounts ; and the Government demand stands against *you* in the treasury books.”

“ That may be true,” objected Kulleem ; “ but it does not establish my claim, for the names are fictitious.”

“ No, but if you deny that they are fictitious, I don’t see how the plea can be contested,” urged Fitrut.

Kulleem still hesitated, and was met by the taunt, “ These things require some knowledge of the world beyond the art of making poetry. A special mode of dealing must be adopted.”

“ As how ? ” said Kulleem.

“ You are the nominal proprietor. I will purchase your right, and act on your deed of sale.”

“ Nonsense ! I might as well sell you the Turkish Empire. ‘ *Samarkand and Bukhara for the mole on my lady’s cheek,* ’ ” laughed Kulleem.

“ You may laugh,” said the other ; “ but how much will you take ? ”

Kulleem thought it was a capital joke, and said, “ Oh, anything.”

“ Well, say something.”

“ A hundred rupees then.”

“Come, I’ll give you a thousand down.”

“In God’s name, sold!” cried Kulleem.

“In God’s name, bought!” cried Fitrut.

And he produced a bag of rupees and counted out the money, and the deed of sale was drawn up and signed.

Kulleem now thought he had a mine of wealth, and, with a wholesome dread that the next trick might be at his own expense, resolved to set up for himself in Chandni Chauk. A city like Dehli, a fool like Kulleem, and a pocket full of money gratis! He took a house, and everything was provided on the instant—chandeliers, furniture, and servants. The very next day he had a poetical conversazioni, and then a *nach*.^{*} Invitations were sent out, and his friends trooped in like so many evil spirits. Even the Mirza was brazen-faced enough to come.

Two months of licence and dissipation soon left him bankrupt. He owed money to the tradesmen and wages to his servants. His friends deserted him, and, after vainly endeavouring to abscond, he was arrested for debt.

It happened that the very day on which he was brought up before the magistrate, the great case of *Nussooh v. Fitrut* was being tried, and thus father and

^{*} The word is commonly written “*nautch*.” It means an entertainment at which professional female dancers exhibit their performances.

son once more came face to face. There was no desire or opportunity for communication between them ; and as Kulleem was led off to gaol, he had the sorry satisfaction of knowing that the arts and perjury of Fitrut had robbed his father of his village. And yet the disagreeableness of only one night in prison, made him shameless enough to appeal to this very father. He wrote as follows : “ I hardly know who I am, or to whom I write, and you will be as much puzzled as myself. My impertinence and disobedience have deprived me of the privileges of a son ; so that this is not a letter from a son to his father, but a bond of repentance and a declaration of helplessness, which bears the signature of the sinful Kulleem. I am an outcast, and a criminal. My punishment is less than I deserve, and my apology comes too late. I have no one but God for my protector, ‘ *who is the restrainer of anger and the forgiver of transgression.*’ I chanced to see this sentence in a book which Ulleem got from a Missionary, ‘ *Repentance is the eraser and sin the stain.*’ Since, therefore, my repentance and remorse have erased my sin, I am once more your son ; and I venture to ask your aid in my distress. I want seven hundred rupees. If you will not bestow it on me as an alms, pray lend it me. You are not ignorant of the merit of freeing a prisoner, or emancipating a slave. If I do not get the money by to-morrow, I am a lost man.—KULLEEM.”

Kulleem was a poet, and word-magic his profession.

Whole assemblies would be in raptures at the recital of his compositions ; and his insincere and hypocritical essay on repentance was, he thought, as good as an order for the money payable on demand. But how was he to find a messenger ? He had struck up an acquaintance with one of the gaolers, who was a dabbler in the art of poetry ; and, after much persuasion, this man promised to convey the missive on condition that the renowned Kulleem should write an ode, introducing his own and his son's names. These names were so uncouth that it was a never-ending puzzle to fit them into the rhythm, and the man was a block-head, and therefore difficult to please ; but after a week's labour Kulleem succeeded in carrying out the gaoler's orders, and Nussooh received his son's communication.

He had no sooner read it than he generously counted out the money, and Kulleem was again set free. Yet even in this emergency he had imposed upon his father, for five hundred rupees would have sufficed for his release. With the two hundred rupees he had thus obtained, Kulleem set off to try his fortunes at Daulatabad.

CHAPTER XII.

DAULATABAD.

DAULATABAD is a petty native state with a revenue of five or six lacs. At the time of Kulleem's visit a young and inexperienced prince, surrounded by flatterers and adventurers, was on the throne, and the place had become a miniature Lucknow. Kulleem looked forward to it as a Paradise. During the journey he had composed an ode in praise of the Prince ; and when he had made himself comfortable in the Serai, all he had to do was to add an account of himself and his claims, and present himself at the palace doors.

Unfortunately for his plans, a revolution had just been effected. The British Resident had interfered to check the progress of disorder, the Prince had been deprived of independent authority, and the Government placed in the hands of a Committee of Management, with the Prince's uncle, a man of tried capacity and

influence, as President. The useless crowd of rakes and sycophants had been dismissed.

* Kulleem, knowing nothing of all this, presently found himself in the presence of a council of grave and reverend Maulvis, instead of the gay revellers he had expected to receive him with open arms. The lines occurred to him : "*I went in search of temple and idol, and blundered into the Haram*"* ; and his first idea was to beat a retreat. But he told himself that, after all, "*under the shadow of the mosque there should be a tavern*," something in his own line might perhaps turn up ; and, accordingly, approaching one of the Maulvis, he said with a bow : "I beg to pay my homage." At the word "homage," the venerable councillor regarded him with attention, and asked him in Arabic whence he came.

Kulleem did not understand a word, and when the question was explained to him, he answered that he came from Dehli. After a brief colloquy he was referred to the President and directed where to find him. Kulleem was again doomed to disappointment. Instead of being surrounded with grandeur and magnificence, the President was a common-looking person engaged in hearing law-suits ; but, being courteously requested to take a seat, the visitor gradually came to understand his worth, as he witnessed his skill in argument and his powers of discernment. When the case

* The *haram* is the sacred enclosure of the *Kaaba* at Mecca.

he was engaged in hearing was disposed of, the President turned to Kulleem, and politely bade him say the reason of his visit.

“Your slave is in exile,” replied Kulleem. “Having heard of the munificence of the Prince of this country, he is desirous of an interview.”

“Munificence conditioned by moderation is a laudable quality,” gravely observed the President; “the Prince’s extravagance has emptied the treasury, and the English have interfered in the interests of the State.”

“I am not looking for a treasury,” was the flippant reply, and he quoted the lines: “*What wants the pearl but a drop of ocean, a bud but a drop of dew?*”

To hear a man, in defiance of etiquette, thus impudently quote poetry in such a presence amazed the listeners. But Kulleem’s habit was inveterate. He thought so much of linguistic skill and repartee, that he had a verse of poetry ready for every occasion, and if he was found fault with, laughingly quoted in reply: “*My rôle is to roll out verse.*”

The President was too dignified to betray annoyance. He replied: “Expectations from the Prince are vain; but, if you are found capable, perhaps some employment may be found for you in the border police.”

“I would rather take personal service under your Excellency; but, if that is not possible, I am willing to fight under the banner of the police, though the *pen* is the *pennon* for me.”

"I am not likely to require your services," coldly replied the President, "but I shall be glad to hear what your qualifications are."

Kulleem rejoined—"As Galib says, '*I am an unrivalled poet.*'"

"Under the present administration, I fear, there is no berth for a gentleman of your profession."

"If there is no eloquence, what is there?" said Kulleem. '*Your kingdom is like a bride without her jewels.*' But surely, as Chief Minister, you can do what you please. '*After God, your Royal Highness!*' as they say."

The President here uttered an aside in Arabic—"God save us from the wiles of such a tongue," and replied aloud: "I am but an insignificant person, Regent of the State in name only."

"That is your want of spirit," said Kulleem, encouraged by the President's forbearance; and, he added, "As Zuhuri says, '*The head on the threshold, the feet in the sky.*' You want a poet to sing your praises, confirm your friends in their allegiance, and scare your foes."

"I had rather have my defects pointed out," rejoined the President. "I am sorry I cannot appreciate your talents, which are no doubt unrivalled; but, to tell you the truth, though my heart is full of evil, thank God there is no room in it for poetry!"

Kulleem could only marvel, and exclaim: "It is my

fate not to be appreciated. Pray let me have an appointment in the police."

The President replied: "As the Arabic proverb says, '*A good adviser should be honest.*' I cannot recommend you to take service in the police. Misgovernment has made the Thakoors on the borders rebellious and unmanageable. No revenue can be collected without bloodshed, and the police have hard work."

"What can I do? There is no help for it," said Kulleem in a tone of despair.

"What do you say to a clerkship in the Revenue Department on twenty rupees a month?"

Kulleem begged to be excused. Such work, he said, was only fit for shopkeepers. So far from being angry, the good President kindly advised him to go home and think about it, and so ended the discussion.

Kulleem withdrew to the Serai, satirical and indignant. But the pressure of necessity was schooling him, and he was aware that the President was awaiting a reply. Suddenly a happy thought occurred. He would dress up as a soldier, accoutre himself with weapons, stroke his moustaches, and present himself to the Committee of Management as an aspirant for military service. He did so, and they gave him a commission as Captain of Sowars there and then. He passed the next few months in the keenest enjoyment of his new and unexpected dignity. He was always prancing about the town with an escort of troopers; and, by way

of vexing his father, the Captain's letters to Dehli, giving an account of his success in life, were pretty frequent.

At length his turn came for active service. A turbulent and powerful chieftain had rebelled, and a force was despatched from Daulatabad for his coercion. The impetuous Kulleem was disabled in the first encounter by a shot which shattered his knee, and his leg was amputated. The shock was too much for his enfeebled constitution. Mortification threatened, and by the advice of the doctors, who thought that his only chance was a change to his native air, a *dak** was laid to Delhi; and in a few hours, more dead than alive, he was conveyed to his old home.

It is impossible to describe the anguish of Fahmeedah at the sight of her son thus laid helpless and insensible at her doors. Nussooh, too, was deeply moved; but the case was urgent, and Fahmeedah at last consented that he should be taken to his sister Naeemah's house, which happened to be next door to a clever surgeon's, so that he might have every care; and accordingly there he was taken, followed by his weeping relatives.

The mention of Naeemah's house reminds us that it is time to tell her story, after which we shall return to Kulleem, whose term of life was drawing to a close.

The expression means that relays of bearers were stationed at the various stages to convey the *dooli* through to Dehli without halting.

CHAPTER XIII.

NAEEMAH AND KULLEEM.

“The dog of the Seven Sleepers, lying at the feet of good men, became human.”—*Sadi*.

It is worth while to reflect a moment on the character and circumstances of Naeemah and Kulleem. They had reached an age when the habits of life become a second nature. Both were married. Kulleem was separated from his wife, and Naeemah from her husband. But there was this difference; that, while Kulleem was hard and unyielding as steel, Naeemah was malleable as lead. He was a man and stern; she was a woman and soft-hearted. He could go into the world, and had hundreds of friends and acquaintances; she was behind the *purdah*, with no society but that of the ladies of the family and occasional visitors to the zenana. The minds of both of them were, so to speak, diseased; but his was the more dangerous ailment, for it was infectious and aggravated by the constant irrita

tion of evil associations. Fearless and ingenious as he was, Kulleem's character was in many respects weak and puerile. He was a finished specimen of the *jeunesse dorée* of the period, who are like women in their love of finery and admiration, rise late and study themselves in the glass till noon, go to rest with their hair parted and plaited under a night-cap, and grieve over the disturbance of a curl-paper, much as Sir Isaac Newton grieved over the mischief done by his dog Diamond. When the barber comes they keep him at work till he can see no longer. When it is time to dress, first comes the cap, which is taken from the block and cautiously fitted on the head so as not to disarrange a hair. Then comes the anxious business of wriggling into sleeves and trousers; the cloth is so fine that it won't bear pulling; hand and foot declare they can't get into an ant-hole: "*How can a camel pass through a needle's eye!*" An hour's gentle persuasion, with the aid of tissue paper, and the garments are slithered on at last, a perfect fit, but so tight a squeeze that the arms are pinioned and the legs astraddle. The gentleman can hardly breathe, let alone cough or sneeze—as well be in the stocks at once! As the poet says: "*Don't ask what the conduct is with such surroundings.*"

• Naeemah, on the other hand, like other ladies of her class, fond as she might be of dress and jewels, was like a carefully laid-up pearl, with no temptations to encounter from the outside world.

We left Naeemah *en route* to her aunt's house. When she alighted and had greeted her aunt she burst into tears. It is the habit of women in the country to weep on the arrival of a friend or guest, after an interval of absence, because they recall the grief of parting. But this is not the custom of the ladies of Dehli, who reserve their tears, as a rule, for family bereavements, and think it unlucky to weep when they receive or meet their friends. Naeemah's aunt was, therefore, surprised at her emotion, but she was aware of her niece's temper and guessed that some quarrel had occurred. She took her in her arms and said :

" Bless us, Naeemah ! You the mother of a son, and weeping ! What will the women say ? Don't cry, my dear ! "

" Mother has beaten me ! " sobbed Naeemah.

" And what then ? Why shouldn't she ? Beating by a parent is correction for the child's good. I know your mother of old ; I daren't cross her even now. But she corrected you for your good, I am sure. Why, look ! your baby is laughing at you ! How now, my little man ! Tell your mammy not to cry ! "

" Ug-goon," crowed the baby, jumping in its mother's arms.

" To be sure, you darling ! Why, what a stout little fellow you are getting ! "

Naeemah dried her tears at her aunt's cheery kindness, and began to recover her spirits. Her aunt

forebore to make any further inquiry ; and when Salihah afterwards told her the circumstances of the quarrel, she was pleased that Naeemah had come to her, and said she would do her best to help her.

Good company is the best preceptor. Naeemah had much to contend against in her father's house. Religion had been no part of her surroundings, and she was ashamed to appear in a new character, and she was moreover just now smarting under a sense of injury. Religion was regarded as a matter of course in her aunt's household, and nobody forced it on her attention ; and though she was contemptuous at first, she gradually came to contemplate what she saw around her with satisfaction. Her aunt's active superintendence of the household, the early rising, the morning devotions, the busy occupations of the day, impressed her with a sense of her own shortcomings ; and before long she began to rise with the rest, and instead of being slovenly and dulled by too much sleep, became as cheerful and healthy as the rest, and as ready as they were to thank God for His daily mercies, and ask for His guidance and protection. She lost the peevish and fretful manner which made everyone's life a burden in her old home ; and by and by her one idea was to effect a reconciliation between her mother and herself.

It happened that some four months after her departure from home there was a marriage at the house of Salihah's uncle, to which Naeemah was invited, partly

on account of her relationship to Salihah, and partly because the bridegroom was her own brother-in-law. Her conduct here was no longer that of the majority of the women, who spent the time in singing songs and gossip ; and the change attracted the attention of the members of her husband's family who were present. He was a God-fearing man, and fond of his wife, though the difference between their habits and sentiments had raised a barrier between them, and had ended in the hostility of his family to her residence among them. They had no sooner reported her behaviour at the wedding than he returned home at once, and made preparations for her reception.

She met her mother, too, among the guests, and fell at her feet to ask forgiveness. Fahmcedah was overjoyed ; and, when the festivities were over, she gratefully thanked her sister and niece for their loving care, and at last carried her daughter home. Their friends among the ladies of the Quarter were asked to meet her, and Naeemah acknowledged her wrong-doing before them all, placed her head upon her mother's feet, embraced Humeedah and kissed the scar upon her forehead, and joined her hands before Bedara.

Next day her husband came for her, and she was domiciled at last as a happy and respected wife in the family she had formerly found it impossible to live with.

It was two months from this time that her brother

Kulleem was brought to her in the condition we have described in the last chapter. Notwithstanding the care and skill of his physicians, his wounds refused to heal, and his prostration was such that he was only sensible at intervals, and talking was forbidden.

The day before he died his strength seemed suddenly to revive, and he even got up and enjoyed his food, and conversed with his relations. He gave them an account of his adventures at Daulatabad, and enquired about everything that had happened since his departure. This return of strength was, as he knew, the last effort of expiring nature. His last words were addressed to his mother, and he said :

“I have spent my life in disobedience to God and man ; and, though there are thousands of such lives, I offer no excuse, and cannot hope to make amends. Yet I am not without consolation, for, in the first place, I die repentant ; in the next place, I am among those who know the stages of the road I have to travel, and will follow me with their prayers and sympathy ; and, lastly, my life may serve as a warning to others, and thus not utterly be useless. As they say, ‘ *I took no heed myself, do you take heed.*’ I have nothing left to wish for but my father’s forgiveness.”

So saying, Kulleem fainted away from the violence of his emotions. His pulse ceased to beat, and the pallor of death spread over his countenance. The women began to weep and lament, and Nussooh, hearing the

disturbance, came in to see the end. With tender hands he administered a few drops of cordial, laid his son's head towards Mecca, and recited the *Kalima*.^{*} Then, for the last time, Kulleem opened his eyes, and, gazing piteously in his father's face, joined his hands in resignation, and yielded up his soul to his Creator.

"God pardon him! He was a fine fellow, with all his faults!"

* The confession of faith, in the words, "There is no God but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

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